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MAY 1995

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with

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Eric Johnson

McLaughlin

Torn & More

Slash

The Band

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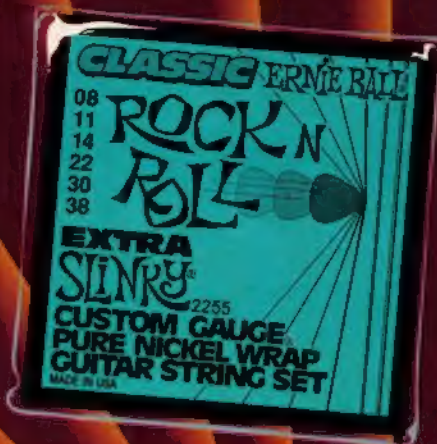


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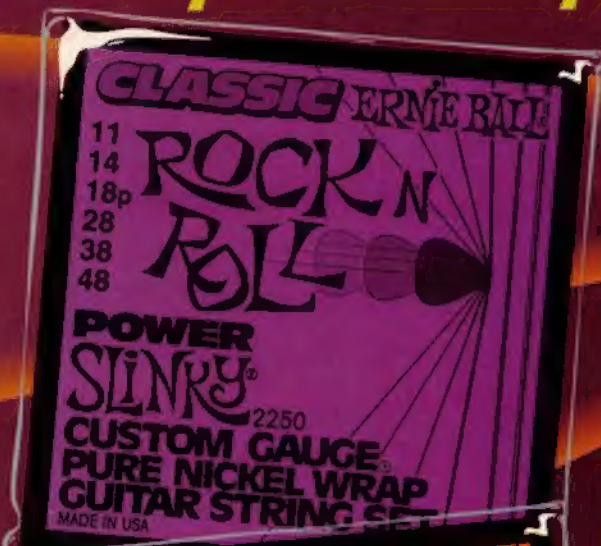


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"I don't usually crank the amp much over 10."—Doyle Bramhall II, June '92

MAY 1995 GUITAR PLAYER 7

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Mojo, Mysticism & Monkey Grips

Ever since George Harrison burned his first stick of incense and Jimi Hendrix floated in his first purple haze, modern guitarists have been readily associated with unknown realms of the mind and heart. There's McLaughlin and Santana's tutelage with Sri Chinmoy, Jimmy Page's alleged occult fascination, Dylan's *Saved* period, Pete Townshend's Sufi leanings. Sure, our cherished instrument has often been a vehicle for self-aggrandizing lick spewage in the crass temple of the almighty ego, but those don't tend to be the performances we remember. Even a breathtaking solo by Stevie Ray Vaughan, Charlie Christian, or Kurt Cobain doesn't excite our analytical selves as much as our spiritual and emotional core.

Though he's technically impeccable, Steve Vai has always championed the inward road as an avenue for self-improvement and musical awakening. And he's not afraid to take chances. "I shaved my body for you guys!" he says with a pious grin. Our otherworldly cover shot by Neil Zlozower required that Vai go deep down into the pain—that crazy silver paint needed a smooth surface, and Steve was glad to oblige: "I'm going all the way for *Guitar Player*." He sure did. In addition to giving us a candid, four-hour-plus interview at his Hollywood home, Steve hand-wrote a beautiful transcription of "The God Eaters," from his new *Alien Love Secrets* EP. It's a fresh dose of that inimitable Vai combination of technical savvy and heady musing.

This month's "Within You Without You" feature uses many ideas Vai has touched on over the years as the springboard for a fascinating roundtable on the topic of music and spirituality. As guitarists, we know *how* to play, but what about *why* we play and, frankly, *what for*? Eric Johnson, Martin Simpson, Carlos Santana, Ottmar Liebert, David Torn, and many others tackle those questions beginning on page 48. We hope it's the beginning of a regular dialogue.

But this issue isn't just about tantric chicken pickin' and the Zen of shred. We brought back a ton of material from this year's National Association Of Music Merchants (NAMM) show in Anaheim, and Art Thompson and Mike Baker have whipped it into an entertaining, information-packed new gear jamboree. Testament's James Murphy joins the crew at "Sessions," plus we give you the dope on Slash's new gig, the Band's ruffled feathers, Chris Whitley's amazing grace, and red-hot new bands Portishead and Bush. As Beatle George once sang, "It's all too much..." —JAMES ROTONDI, ASSOCIATE EDITOR



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Feedback

Punching Bag

After perusing your annual Readers Poll, it's evident that you appeal to those readers who must be regarded as microcephalic. Save for the classical guitarist mentioned, not one of your so-called poll winners could play his/her way out of a wet paper bag. Your audience is preoccupied with no-talent, run-of-the-mill wank-off artists who wouldn't know an arpeggio from a hole in the ground. Of course, *Guitar Player* magazine is to blame for cultivating such a deliriously inept and uneducated readership. It is *Guitar Player's* mission to only feature the also-rans of guitar playing. Your "Gallery of the Greats" is a who's-who of musical lowlifedom. Have you ever heard of the undeniably gifted virtuoso Yngwie J. Malmsteen? On a bad hair day, Yngwie could wipe the floor with any of your beloved Gallery of the Greats.

Thankfully, all of the reputable guitar magazines have featured Yngwie and other truly talented guitarists like Bernd Steidl and Eliot Fisk. I realize that music is a personal thing, but when a magazine goes out of its way to ignore the greatest guitarist of our time, Yngwie, then a concerned citizen like me, with a Ph.D. in mathematics, has to come to the fore and set the record straight.

The Good Doctor
Detroit, MI

Donnelly Bashing

You must be kidding! How is it possible that a complete novice like Tanya Donnelly has made her way onto the pages of the greatest guitar magazine in the world? It is obvious that Ms. Donnelly is a musical illiterate. Of course, the answer is a resounding "no" when asked if she practices outside of writing songs. It's no wonder she doesn't like solos much. When asked if she is aware of the names of the chords she's playing, she replies, "Not really, but I invent a lot of chords!" Well, duh! You could hear a collective groan from the thousands of real guitar players who read your magazine each month. Keep up the otherwise great work and we'll forgive the occasional clunker.

Neil Hora
Rahway, NJ

Jas Obrecht responds: "When a player's ability to name the notes and chords he or she plays becomes a criterion for coverage in GP, you'll see no more stories on Jimi Hendrix, Albert King, Muddy Waters, Wes Montgomery, Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton,

and many others. I wrote about Tanya for the same reason I've written about Hendrix, King, Waters, et al: She's brought something new to the art."

Shred Be Not Proud

It's time for "shredders" to grow up and stop crying. For instance, in Dweezil Zappa's interview with Van Halen [Mar. '95], he rips on current music and the lack of technique of these "unknown" players. I have read Malmsteen, Steve Lukather, and now Dweezil Zappa cap on other musical styles and complain that people just don't know good music when they hear it. However, I have yet to read a player such as Chris Parkening rip on metal players' inability to sight-read or play with taste or feel. Nor have I read of greats such as Jerry Donahue or the late Danny Gatton belittling shredders' over-dependence on using distortion and other effects to cover up their lack of feel. Hey, I like some shred, but I think we could all do without the ego-trip, "look at me" mentality.

Keith Weyuker
Sacramento, CA

Mother Mary

On behalf of my husband and myself, may I tell you how much we appreciated the excellent article you wrote about our son John Christ in the February *Guitar Player*. We thought your questions were excellent, resulting in a very different interview. And yes, thank you *very* much for nixing out the cuss words for me. An article like yours can only be helpful to John in his efforts to build a career in music.

Mary C. [last name withheld]
Baltimore, MD

Stone Free

In the eight years since I conquered the THC demon and smoked my last joint, I've learned that life is much more interesting when processed through a clear mind. Yeah, I used to think like John Frusciante, that I needed to be stoned to be creative. Then again, I also used to think it was fun to cough real hard every morning.

Anthony DeBarros
Hyde Park, NY

Mod Squad

Your JCM 800 Mega Drive Project was just what I've been looking for. After changing to EL34s and rebiasing, it still lacked the front-



end gain of my old Marshall. However, I had no control over preamp gain until I swapped the grid connections on VL. I tamed the "beast" by connecting wire "C" to 7 and wire "D" to 2. Keep the mods coming. Good stuff.

Robert Stoll
Shreveport, LA

Star Tech

Long-overdue and well-deserved kudos to Technical Editor Art Thompson. Art consistently writes well-worded articles on the tech side of guitar playing, which I enjoy a great deal, but more importantly, he lends humor to GP in his hilarious reviews of old equipment, which I enjoy even more. His reviews of old pawnshop amps printed several months ago and his more recent column "Sex And The Six-Knob Job" kept me laughing long after I was done reading. It takes a strong person to admit that there is a huge amount of crap in the industry that he obviously loves a great deal. I particularly enjoyed his references to an inability to determine "why the Legend (Rock 'n' Roll 50) sucks so very, very hard" and the electronics of a Harmony Rocket ("a honkin' switch that looks like it was pirated from a Sears swamp cooler"). Keep up the good work, Art. God knows we could all use a break from taking ourselves so seriously.

Paul Burnside
Austin, TX

Solidbody M.I.A.s

Don't get me wrong. The Shootouts are a great idea. But you have consistently left one guitar out of the running, and I don't know why. Nope, I'm not talking about Music Man or

Address correspondence to Feedback, c/o *Guitar Player*, 411 Borel Ave. #100, San Mateo, CA 94402, or email us at guitplyr@mfi.com.

FEEDBACK

Samick; I mean Rickenbacker.

I don't work for Rickenbacker or anything, but I thought it was kind of weird that you would include the Chandler 555, which is obviously influenced by the Rickenbacker 320/325 series, but not an actual Rick itself. I am pretty sure that Rickenbacker makes guitars that were within the price specs for your test; I got my 330 for a lot less than the top price quotes on the highest-priced critter in your Shootout.

Rickenbacker has made electric guitars longer than anybody else; they made the first one. Point for point you can compare them to

other guitars in their price range, and they kick butt in all areas. The construction quality is amazing, the neck is great, the tone is superior, the finish is wonderful. I could go on and on, but you get my point.

Mark Saucier
New Orleans, LA

Art Thompson responds: "Like the old saying goes, 'You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink.' In this case, the 'horse' is Rickenbacker. Try as we might to convince Ricky to voluntarily join the herd, cold hooves sent him bolting once again. Unfortunately, we were unable to find another suitable Rickenbacker in

time for our evaluation."

I just finished reading your mid-priced solid-body Shootout. I think this kind of article is very useful for working musicians and budget-conscious pickers like myself who don't have money to waste and want to get a good guitar without searching too far. It also promotes competition among companies and hopefully helps create better instruments for us all. I was, however, disappointed in Music Man's decision not to provide their Silhouette model for testing.

Tom Bollum
St. Peter, MN

Beat's Happening!

I'd like to personally thank Andy Ellis on an eye-and-ear opening experience through his excellent article and lesson, "Blue Notes—The Funky Side Of Beatnik-Era Jazz" in the January '95 issue. As a loyal reader and fellow player for twenty-something years, I'm always in search of something new and interesting for my ears and hands to explore. Being mostly a rock, blues, and fusion player, I have found this Beatnik-era jazz most interesting to explore. I'd like to add another CD to Andy's list: *Kenny Burrell With John Coltrane* [New Jazz], recorded March 7, 1958. Andy's new Sessions section is also excellent—keep up the great work.

Michael Gismondi
Lynbrook, NY

Jimi Strung Out

There appears to be some controversy as to how Jimi Hendrix strung his guitars. For years people have said that Jimi took a right-handed guitar, turned it upside-down, and played it without restringing it for his left-handed playing. I am really confused about this issue and would like to get it straight.

Joel Keenan
Denver, CO

Okay, here goes: Jimi usually flipped over a righty guitar and restrung it the standard way, with the skinniest string toward his toes. James Gurley, whose band Big Brother & The Holding Company shared many venues with Jimi, observed firsthand that Jimi "could play the guitar either right- or left-handed, strung either way." Bandmate Sam Andrew confirms the report: "That's a fact. And his playing was the same; it wasn't like he was doing any compromising because of a harder position."

Joni Mussolini?

Thank you for featuring two of my favorite singer/songwriters, Stephen Stills and Joni Mitchell, in the Feb. '95 GP. It was great to see Stephen in your pages; the last time that I can

Continued on page 60

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Baroque On The Water

STEVE MORSE JOINS DEEP PURPLE

They were rightfully cautious, and so was I," says Deep Purple guitarist Steve Morse about his swift courtship with his new bandmates, who called him out of the blue late last summer. "One of the very first questions I asked my manager was, 'Are these guys going to make me wear funny clothes?'"

Morse could probably justify such concerns; he is, after all, the only major guitar hero ever to have shorn off his hair for a stint as a button-down commercial airline pilot. Now, with the completion of his own band's killer new disc *Structural Dam-*

age, Steve is deep into pre-production with Purple, who have finally closed the book on the Ritchie Blackmore era after a year of uncertainty and several months of overseas work with temporary fill-in Joe Satriani. Shortly into rehearsals with Morse, they invited him to stay on for good. Even so, Morse says he will continue working with the Steve Morse Band.

Apart from their penchant for hanging out in Orlando, Florida—an easy 90 minutes from Steve's home—the legendary proto-metal group had incentive to seek out Morse, a wildly versatile composer and instrumentalist whose playing

with the Steve Morse Band and Dixie Dregs earned him Titan status among readers of this magazine. What drew Morse to Purple? Their musicianship, he says, and their openness to new possibilities for their music. Steve puts

them at a level with first-call studio players: effortlessly quick to create arrangements and shape new ideas into album-quality material. "It wasn't a labored, 'This is what we do and that's all we do' situation," he says of their writing sessions thus far. "It was like, 'Sure—let's try it.'"

Steve prepared for his first shows by listening to their recent live tapes ("Satriani's parts were real inventive") rather than referring exclusively to the original recordings. The new lineup clicked instantly. "One impressive thing was how they could hold me by the hand and give little cues at just the right places,"

Steve says. "[Organist] Jon Lord has incredible ears; he really listens to a soloist. Even on the first show, he would play chords based on the note he *thought* I was about to hit. It's strange—without meaning to, I improvise more in this group than we did in the Dregs."

While his signature country and bluegrass motifs won't make their way onto the next Deep Purple album, Steve isn't limiting himself to heavy rock motifs either. His trademark tone, however, will be EQ'd to dovetail with Lord's. He declined the band's offer to work up his own tunes for Purple shows, but he's already got them working on new odd-time material. "Everything goes," he says. "The main thing I tell the guys is, 'Hey, it's up to you to decide what the sound of the band is, because I like *lots* of different styles, and I'm gonna be spewing new ideas every day.'" You can take the boy out of the country. . . —MATT RESNICOFF

R O



It's nice to be able to make some noise again."
Rossdale (L) and Pulsford (R) hang zen.

In England, we'll probably be viewed as an American band," jokes Bush's Nigel Pulsford. He has a point.

Bush's seething debut, *Sixteen Stone* [Trauma/Interscope]—released in the band's native England four months after it exploded in the U.S.—is laden with enough crunchy power chords to evoke Manhattan over Manchester. "Our approach is a little more direct than most English bands," Pulsford admits. "Things seem to be more punk rock now, a lot more honest. It's nice to be able to make some noise again."

On *Stone*, Pulsford proudly pummels an '89 Strat that's been beautifully oil-painted by his girlfriend. "For me, a Strat has more flexibility than a Les Paul," he explains. "The neck feels more comfortable, and I can get loads of sustain. Instead of changing guitars, I keep my action quite high so I can get nice, full chords and a real *pluck* out of the strings."

The album's lead track, the warbly MTV Buzz Bin favorite "Everything Zen," is slathered with tasty, distorted slide lines. "It was the best way to capture the intensity and emotion of that song," clarifies Pulsford, who prefers brass slides. To create the edgy industrial scrape of "Monkey," he stomped on a Boss PS-3 pitch shifter run through a Marshall 6100 30th Anniversary Series head. A Fender Princeton provided the squawk for the brooding "Alien." "The

tremolo just floats around in the air on that one," Pulsford marvels. For the band's first American tour, he's experimenting with a Mesa Trem-O-Verb combo while singer Gavin Rossdale is running his '60s jazzmaster through a Fender Bassman.

As their success continues to blossom, Pulsford and his Bushmates are quickly getting used to American music programming quirks. "In Miami we performed in between Ice Cube and Donna Summer for a party on The Box music channel," he relates. "What a strange gig that was. I'm still not sure that it actually happened!"

MIKE METTLER

FRET WIRE

THE ROVENS: Jimmy Page and

Robert Plant started their

yearlong world tour in Janu-

ary, backed by a five-piece

band that includes sometime

Cure guitarist/banjoist **Perl**

Thompson and does *not* in-

clude **John Paul Jones**.

The lads are carting along an

eight-member string and per-

cussion group, and will be

joined by local orchestras at

each venue. . . . **GIVING IT UP:** Last

January, **Bonnie Raitt** and

Fender took a time-out from

the non-stop tawdriness that

is NAMM to announce the

Bonnie Raitt Guitar Project.

During a silent auction and

benefit concert, over \$80,000

was raised for the Project,

which is dedicated to provid-

ing inner-city girls with the

opportunity to learn to play

the guitar. . . . **VINTAGE MANIA** At

the recent "40 Years Of Rock

& Roll" auction at Guernsey's

in New York, hundreds of rare

and exotic guitars fetched un-

believable prices. A damaged

Jaguar belonging to **Kurt**

Cobain sold for \$17,000, a

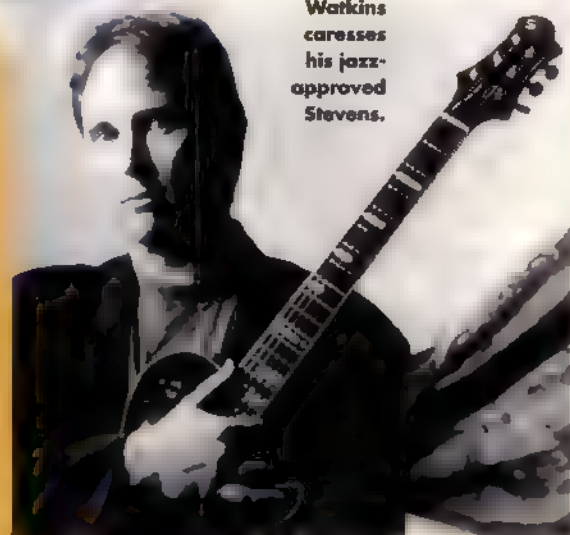
BURNING ACROSS THE U.S.

INTRO MITCH WATKINS

Austin City, No Limits

Even in as eclectic a melting pot as Austin, Texas, Mitch Watkins stands out as one of the most versatile guitarists in town. *Humhead*, his new release on Dos (500 San Marcos, Ste. 200, Austin, TX 78702), follows three high-energy jazz outings on Enja.

"Making records is an opportunity to assimilate the experiences I've had," offers Watkins, 42. Those experiences include working with such diverse acts as Leonard Cohen, jazz organist Barbara Dennerlein, country singer Jimmie Dale Gilmore, and Texas rocker Joe Ely. "Early on," reflects the native Texan, "I figured if I was going to earn a living at this, I'd benefit from being conversant in different styles. As I did that, I realized I enjoyed things about all of them. It's less and less a matter of 'changing hats'—there's more of a thread. For example, if I approach a jazz standard with complicated changes, I'm trying to work more on skillful editing. I don't aspire to just blow it out anymore. Some of that is a result of being supportive behind singers, where your role is to paint the backdrop. Working with Leonard tuned me in to that. It might just be C, F, and G, but you can set up all kinds of challenges to get from the C to the F.



Watkins
caresses
his jazz-
approved
Stevens.

At no time do I feel I'm lowering myself, or that anything's missing in the fun department."

Still, Mitch insists, he must have the right guitar for each job: "If I've got a country gig, I can't see bringing anything but a Tele. As far as playing jazz goes, I love my Stevens LJ-1." Luckily his trusty Fender Vibrolux (with Boogie and Hughes & Kettner preamps when needed) is nearly as flexible as Watkins himself —DAN FORTE



Henry Qualls

Henry Qualls makes most of today's blues acts sound plain unmanly. He's a field mower by trade, and since the '50s his main venue has been his porch, where he plays on Saturdays for the good folks of Elmo, Texas (population 300). He's a living link to Li'l Son Jackson and Frankie Lee Sims, whom he saw play in nearby Dallas during the '40s.

But deep-voiced Qualls is very much his own man. Completely unsullied by show business, his music is rough-cut and coarse. His big workingman's hands wring a lonely, earthy sound from his guitar, without the help of picks. Sometimes he plays Strats, but his trademark ax is Maybelline, a rugged old electric he bought from Montgomery Ward in 1958. Between blues numbers, Henry lays Maybelline flat on his lap and frets her with a Tabasco sauce bottle, creating deep country gospel as eerie and compelling as a backwoods graveyard.

"We used to have a well, a cistern," he says of his transition from acoustic to electric, "and in the summer that booger'd go dry. I'd take my ladder and guitar and go down there and play, and it'd sound just like an electric—with echo, you know. When I got my electric, I didn't have to go down in no well to sound like I was in one, so that's when I really got serious!"

Word of Qualls reached promoter Jaap Hindricks, who booked him for a triumphant set at Holland's Blues Estafette '94 concert. Back home, producer Chuck Nevitt recorded Henry direct to two-track for the Dallas Blues Society CD *Blues From Elmo, Texas* (Box 190406, Dallas, TX 75219). Now the rest of the world blues community can catch up on what Elmo has enjoyed for decades.

TIM SCHULLER

Rough-Cut Texas Blues

KEVIN SALEM

"**M**usic and chord progressions alone do not a song make," proclaims Kevin Salem. "Songwriting is like starting with an empty refrigerator. I keep piling food into it until I can't close the door, and then I have to pull something out. So I take a lick from an unfinished song over here and add it to a lyric from a song over there to create something new."

Salem, late of the Boston roots-pop combo Dumptruck and a sideman who's backed up Freedy Johnston and Yo La Tengo, stocks the fridge with rough-hewn pop treats like "Will" and "Diviner" on his Roadrunner solo debut, *Soma City*. He pens the bulk of his material on a dropped-D-tuned '52 National Debonaire. "It's easier to sort out the majors and minors in dropped-D," he suggests. "I just look for the root and the 5th, and let the melody do the rest." On *Soma*, Salem strums producer Niko Bolas' '50s Silvertone and a '70s Fender Malibu for his acoustic tracks. He also wrangles a '63 Jazzmaster, '58 Les Paul, '58 Les Paul Junior, and '69 and '70 Telecasters. A '61 Bassman head and an Orange amp supply most of Salem's juice, but he has a special reverence for a certain Vox AC30. "For my European tours, I always go to the same rental company in Holland and ask for the model by its exact stock number," he explains. "It's the loudest AC30 on the planet."

These days, Salem is also in demand as a producer—he's worked with up-and-coming alternarockers Madder Rose, Lisa Loeb, and Scarce. And he does have one dream production job in mind: the Rolling Stones. "There'd be barbed wire all around the studio," Salem chuckles, "they could each only have a \$5 bill, they can't call anybody, and they're not allowed to leave until I like it."

—MIKE METTLER



Gibson Flying V owned by **Dave Davies** of the **Kinks** was bought for \$24,000, and one of **Jaco Pastorius'** basses brought in \$15,000. But a famed 1949 Fender Broadcaster prototype failed to sell because the highest bid—an astonishing \$425,000—was below the seller's minimum price. Huh? . . . **HAWK HAPPENS:** Avant-guitarist **Henry Kaiser** is one busy guy these days. He's formed a band, the **Mistakes**, with *GP* columnist and **Zappa** sideman **Mike Keneally**, bassist **Andy West** (formerly of the **Dregs**), and former **Tubes** drummer **Prairie Prince**.

Look for an album in late spring. Henry has also been gigging with **Bob Weir**—the two are billed as the **Valentines**—and we're informed that Henry and Jimmy Carter are trying to negotiate an end to the trouble in Bosnia. That's a joke. . . . **BLUES 101:** The House of Blues, the popular chain of blues clubs headquartered in Hollywood, has created the International House of Blues Foundation. By offering educational tours of the clubs and funding

INTRO Catch A New Wave

If there's such a thing as progressive surf music, the Mermen may rule the genre. The San Francisco instrumental combo recalls traditional twang-and-twist surf bands about as much as King Crimson resembles the Ramones. Says guitarist/songwriter Jim Thomas, "I definitely went through a stage early in my career when I said, 'Ooh, I like that tube reverb sound' and 'I wanna play "Pipeline" like that,' but that wore away very quickly."

Prone to sweeping, dramatic suites and long stretches of spacey ambience, the Mermen don't evoke the gnarliness of a particular wave so much as the breadth of the ocean itself. The band's latest album, *Food For Other Fish* [Kelptone, c/o Lipp Service, 380 Dolores #10, San Francisco, CA 94110], amply showcases Thomas' expansion on the surf aesthetic. There's plenty of twangy reverberation and liquid whammy work, even the occasional tribal tattoo, but just as often Thomas' guitar growls with guttural feedback or dissipates altogether amidst the muted seascape. "I just kind of follow the sounds in my head," explains the guitarist. "I play whatever the song dictates."

Thomas' rig is as unique as his mutations of classic surf sounds. His Fender American Standard Strats are stripped of volume and tone pots; three cords wired directly to the pickups feed a trio of Fender amps (a combination of Dual Showmans and Twin Reverbs). Line-out signals from each preamp feed a splitter box that divides the signal "about a zillion ways," feeding an array of processors that eventually reunite in a Roland 24-channel mixer. Four ADA MIDI

pedals help control the mix.

"It's a really impossible setup," admits Thomas. But that doesn't stop him from sending his axes airborne when the mood strikes. "Man, I throw those guitars," he grins. "They look like they're a hundred years old, all chipped and cracked. It's not planned, but I do it every once in a while, and then always swear that I'm never gonna do it again."

—TIM KENNEALLY



Bassist Alan Whitman, Thomas, and drummer Martyn Jones get behind the eight ball.

THE MERMEN

Portishead

THE TRIPPY ART OF UN-GUITAR

"This is not a guitar thing, really," says Adrian Utley, producer and guitarist for Portishead, leading exponents of the "trip-hop" wave. The Bristol, England-based group combines densely layered acoustic and electric instrumentation, soulful crooning, and the studio techniques of hip hop into one of the most richly inventive sounds in modern pop. "It's about using guitar as a sound source rather than guitar for guitar's sake."

The haunting musical moods that fill Portishead's 1994 debut *Dummy* contain nary a routine guitar solo or feedback-drenched rhythm fill. The group—led by keyboardist/sampler Geoff Barrow and enchanting vocalist Beth Gibbons, with supporting members Utley and engineer Dave McDonald—recontextualizes the instrument in innovative, often disorienting ways.

From the tortured Hendrix-like riff that creeps into the chorus of "Glory Box" to the Link Wray-ish line that grinds over a sample from Lalo Schiffrin's *Mission: Impossible* theme in "Sour Times," Utley's guitar alternately bubbles in the back-

drop and pokes to the surface in raging torrents. It's less a lead instrument and more a tool for dramatic punctuation.

Plugging his favorite Gibson ES-335 into a cast of old Fender amps and pawnshop fuzzboxes ("I like the Fuzz Face and Big Muff"), many of Utley's parts were first recorded onto vinyl, then sampled into the mix as needed. This technique was used for the woozy riff that gives "Wandering Star" its fractured, eerie quality. In "Strangers," a similar strategy resulted in the scratchy, noodling guitar part that sounds like it was lifted off an old jazz 78. "That was an absolute piece-of-shit acoustic we found lying around the studio," laughs Utley. "We tuned it up, recorded it onto a dictaphone, and put it on 'Strangers.'"

For a 37-year-old jazz-trained guitarist who's led numerous British blues bands and recorded with his longtime idol Jeff Beck on *Crazy Legs*, playing in Portishead is quite a departure. "It's pretty weird stuff guitar-wise," Utley says. "But it doesn't bother me playing guitar not like a guitar. It's an adventure."

—JASON FINE



Coyne toss: Wayne in a Fender frenzy and beaming backstage.



"Anarchy in music is the best way to go," says Flaming Lips founder, lead singer, and guitarist Wayne Coyne. "I don't think it's good in life, but as far as music goes, it's better not to rely on the rules." The Flaming Lips started bending the rules in Oklahoma City more than ten years ago, transforming searing white noise into dense, intoxicating power pop. But it's taken eight albums for the critically acclaimed band to burn their way into the mainstream with a catchy ditty called "She Don't Use Jelly" from 1993's *Transmissions From The Satellite Heart*.

A fan of pickers like Glen Campbell and Rowland S. Howard of the Birthday Party, Coyne plays a Harmony Rocket, a Fender Jazzmaster, and a Strat loaded with Seymour Duncan Hot Rails pickups. Co-guitarist Ronald Jones favors an early-'70s Fender Jaguar, effecting his sound with a DigiTech digital delay pedal and a Roland SE 70 multi-effector. Both Lips run their signals into two amps. Wayne prefers a Fender Twin on one side of the stage and a Fender Super 60 with a 2x15 cab on the other. Ronald teams his Fender Super Twin with a Roland JC-120. The end result is often a frenzy of feedback.

"When you put on the headphones or when you come see us perform, it's like a whole trip in itself," explains Jones. "Yeah," says Coyne. "Sort of a crossbreed between Jim Morrison and Dr. Seuss, or Syd Barrett replacing Robert Plant in Led Zeppelin."

FLAMING LIPS

Anarchy in The U.S.



"Blues Ambassadors" college scholarships, the Foundation hopes to draw attention to the blues as a unique American art form, as well as to bring music and art back into public schools in an effort to increase racial harmony. Right on. . . . **WE'VE GOT A WINNER:** The winner of our December '94 Project Studio Giveaway is Eric Pearson of Richfield, Minnesota. Congratulations, dude. . . . **DISCOLOURED:** We hate to be the bearers of bad news, but we thought you should know that **Living Colour** has broken up. Explaining the split, bandleader **Vernon Reid** said that the band's direction had become confused and that solo projects for all members were beginning to assume more importance. A great band that deserved more. . . . **HIS NAME WAS PRINCE:** Señor Symbol, the gleeful glyph—whatever you want to call him—has just completed a monthlong tour of the U.K., a prelude to an "anticipated" full U.S. tour later this spring. The elaborately staged tour is reportedly based on erotic

—SPENCE D.



DEBBIE DAVIES

Blues For The Iceman

themes (how odd), and may be the only chance the public gets to hear songs from the maestro's newest album, *The Gold Experience*. Due to a dispute with Warner Brothers, the record's release has been canceled, and we all know that when this guy decides to shelve a record, it *stays* shelved, right? . . .

MIKE BAKER

"There's just something about those Texas guys—Gate-mouth Brown, Albert Collins, and T-Bone Walker," enthuses Debbie Davies. "They're not afraid to turn up the treble and sting ya." During Davies' three-year stint with Albert Collins & The Icebreakers, she played her own stinging, precision fills on a reissue '62 Fender Stratocaster. But with her 1993 Antone's solo debut, *Picture This*, Davies picked up the genuine '65 Strat that continues to be her ax of choice on her recent follow-up, *Loose Tonight*, which she dedicates to Collins' memory.

"The '65 has much more warmth and overtones than the reissue," says Davies. "The reissue sounds really cool and it has more output—it overdrives the amp a bit more—but it just doesn't have the same personality or soul as the

vintage Strat." It's no surprise that Davies also prefers a classic amp—a '67 Fender Super Reverb.

For her solo on the Hubert Sumlin-meets-Slim Harpo groove of "Wrong Man For Me," Davies trades her characteristic rich, full-bodied tone for a downright piercing wail. "Usually I play the middle or treble pickup alone," she explains, "but on that tune I was playing out of phase to get that thinner tone for a different personality."

Though Davies says she's probably more influenced by Texas blues than Chicago blues, there is one notable exception. "Texas blues is more articulate than Chicago blues, which is looser, rawer, and wilder," she offers, "but then, those are the reasons I love Magic Sam. When I feel uninspired, he's the one I always go back to."

—ALVIN RAMSON

RONNIE EARL

Gets Right-Sized

"Working with retarded adults is the heaviest gig I've ever had,"

says Ronnie Earl, describing his bi-weekly, four-hour special-ed classes. "I play them blues and jazz. I walk in and it's, 'Here comes the music man.' They have no idea I make records. It keeps me humble and grateful."

These days road vet Earl is on top of his game and playing with acute sensitivity. He's forging a fresh instrumental blues style that's perhaps best described as Magic Sam meets Kenny Burrell. Ronnie's recent *Language Of The Soul* (Rounder/Bullseye Blues), which features his biting Strat riding over slinky organ grooves, wowed critics and fans alike. A smoky, roadhouse mood is evident on Earl's new Bullseye release, *The Blues Guitar Virtuoso, Live In Europe*. Packed with spanky, clucking Strat and burnished Gibson ES-345 lines, this rollicking set proves how well instrumentals go down with Ronnie's enthusiastic fans.

The dice are rolling Earl's way now, but life wasn't always so copacetic. "My greatest success is I'm sober and alive," Ronnie admits. "I had to get off the road. I was in heavy rotation, just

spinning." Six years ago, Earl entered a 12-step recovery program and found new direction: "I love performing now—it's a very spiritual thing. I try to project love and healing. I don't know *what* I was projecting when I was drinking and drugging, but I don't think it was love. I wore black suits—a bad cat, you know—and played heavy blues all the time. My music felt very colorless. That roller coaster lasted 15 years—the whole time I was in Roomful Of Blues up through the first year I had my own band. Today, I'm into exploring color. I still play heavy blues, but I mix it up with pretty songs. It's like blending the masculine side and feminine sides we all have."

Years of dues have imbued Ronnie with a road warrior's wisdom: "When I used to compare myself to other players, I'd come up short," he admits. "But I've learned you have to stay right-sized. You're not more and not less than anyone else. We all have our own light; that's what makes it beautiful. For the last few years, I'd pray, 'Could I please have my own voice?' And with these recent records, it's starting to happen."

—ANDY ELLIS

Painting new colors with a prized 1952 Gibson ES-5.

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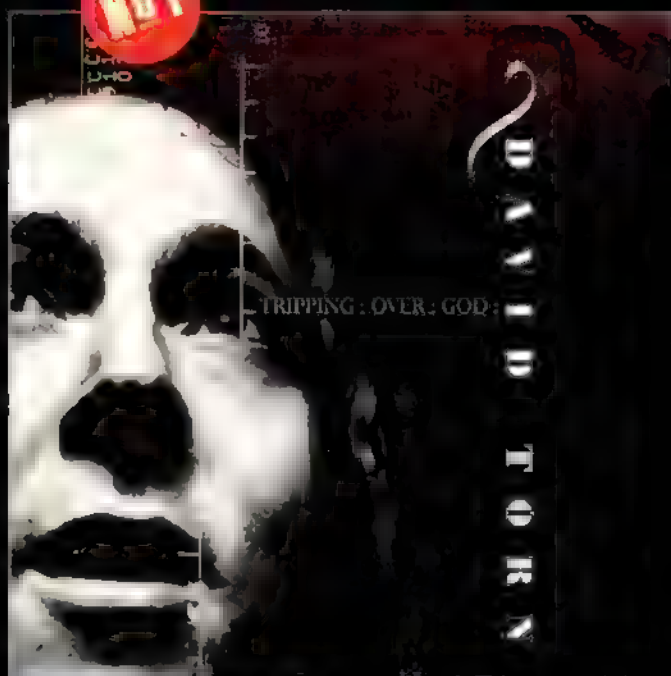


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DAVID TORN

TRIPPING OVER GOD



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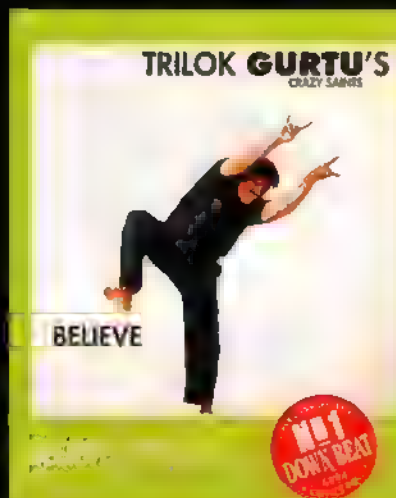
The electric guitar may be the world's most powerful modern musical force. There are untold numbers of players: Few innovators. David Torn stands in the magik circle. With an early ear and eyesful of Hendrix at Woodstock, Torn soon sought the knowledge of contemporary masters Abercrombie and Martino. He studied, discarded his notes and wrote from memory, sharpening his vision alongside Don Cherry, Jan Garbarek, Mark Isham, Bill Bruford and within the folds of the Everyman Band. After a four year absence from recording

and touring-during which he literally recovered from brain surgery-his return via Polytown was met with universal acclaim. With cohorts Mick Karn and Terry Bozzio, Torn toured North America, thrilling audiences with joyfully applied chaos and intelligence. Tripping Over God is all Torn, every screaming nuance, each pesky loop. Listeners are advised to watch their step. "He can take a single note and make it careen from a scream to a sigh that will leave you devastated" -CD Review

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Profile

Monster Magnet



BY MIKE METTLER

Many guitarists look back fondly upon their first guitar—that dime-store Strat knockoff, that scruffy acoustic. But Dave Wyndorf, captain of Monster Magnet, the sonic hurricane from New Jersey, gets misty-eyed remembering his first fuzzbox. “I got my first guitar for 25 bucks from an antique store, along with a Fuzz Face,” he recalls with a grin. “I was *much* more excited about the fuzzbox than I was about the guitar.”

It's a love affair that continues to this day. Monster Magnet's second major-label opus, *Dopes To Infinity* [A&M], basks in the glow of Wyndorf's multi-layered, megafuzzed sunshine. The album's mixing engineer, Alan Moulder (Smashing Pumpkins, Nine Inch Nails, My Bloody Valentine), pegs the band's stormy glory as being “somewhat Sabbath and Hawkwind, yet stamped with its own identity.”

With lead guitarist Ed Mundell tackling *Infinity*'s array of “impossible” lead guitar parts, Wyndorf himself handled the rhythm work on an assortment of axes, including '70s Les Pauls and SGs, a Jerry Jones 12-string, a Jerry Jones electric sitar, and “numerous Strats of different



“Nothing else satisfies.”
Mundell (L) and Wyndorf play Strats for their “stormy glory.”

vintages.” A theremin pops up on the cosmic “Ego, The Living Planet,” and Mellotron embellishes both the trippy “Blow ‘Em Off” and the metallic “Look To Your Orb For A Warning.” Wyndorf says he learned how to play these exotic instruments in just a few hours, since he had to record them the same day he rented them. “The theremin sounds like an instant horror movie, and the Mellotron sounds like instant doom,” he marvels. Wyndorf, who co-produced *Infinity* at New York City's Magic Shop with Steve Rosenthal, jumped at the chance to record with 48 tracks (Magnet's previous platter, 1992's hard-hitting *Superjudge*, was done on

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MONSTER MAGNET

24). After two grueling months, the duo handed their tapes over to Moulder, who was pleased with the quality of the rough mixes. "They really put the hours in up front, which made it a lot easier for me—I didn't have to do any salvaging," he reports. "Dave had a clear vision of what he wanted, so all I really had to do was make it clean and loud, which sometimes meant adding low end to make things fatter or high mids to poke through the drums."

Wyndorf claims his goal was "to make this record sound a lot smoother than our previous ones, but somehow *more* cosmic; I wanted it to be both warm and fuzzy." To achieve his goal, Wyndorf took up permanent residence in the Fuzzbox Zone.

"Damn, which ones *didn't* we use?" he muses. "I used everything: an old Sam Ash, a Fuzz Face, a Big Muff. As for amps, there was an old 15-watt Univox, 50- and 100-watt Vox reissues, some Marshalls—first time I ever used them—an old Fender Twin, a Fender Bassman, and a Fender Vibrolux. Everything was mixed and matched."

Capturing distortion was paramount. "I had to make sure the thing had a buzz to it that wasn't totally irritating," Wyndorf recounts. "In the past I've *wanted* to be totally irritating, but this time I wanted to get a little bit rounder and more emotive. But sometimes I'd go direct with the Big Muff, like on 'I Control,' or for the leads on 'Third Alternative' and 'Dead Christmas.' Man, those tracks are *extremely* saturated."

Moulder, says Wyndorf, is the one man who can "walk the line between total saturation and indecipherable muck." Moulder reveals his special remedy: "Generally, each Magnet song had 16 tracks of guitar to work with, so to keep it all from getting too muddy, I subgrouped the whole lot and put it through a BBE Sonic Maximizer. If you've ever had problems with clarity, a Sonic Maximizer is great for giving you that special zing, that perfect low-end growl."

The vacuum-packed wallop of "Negasonic Teenage Warhead" turned out to be Moulder's favorite mix. "It's what I call one of those classic 'loud bit/quiet bit' songs," he enthuses. "I wanted it to sound really fat. To get that kind of in-your-face effect, a lot of people say they 'compress the shit' out of things by working their compressor to the max, but sometimes all that does is make things quieter and smaller. What you have to do instead is find the *threshold* of where it's compressing—then you've got it."

Thresholds are Wyndorf's specialty. "My thinking in cosmic proportions is definitely inspired by the spirit of Jack Kirby," he states, referring to the late comic book artist who created characters such as the Fantastic Four and the Forever People. "When you get a taste for that kind of thing early in life, nothing else satisfies." Except maybe 48 tracks of Monster Magnet. ■



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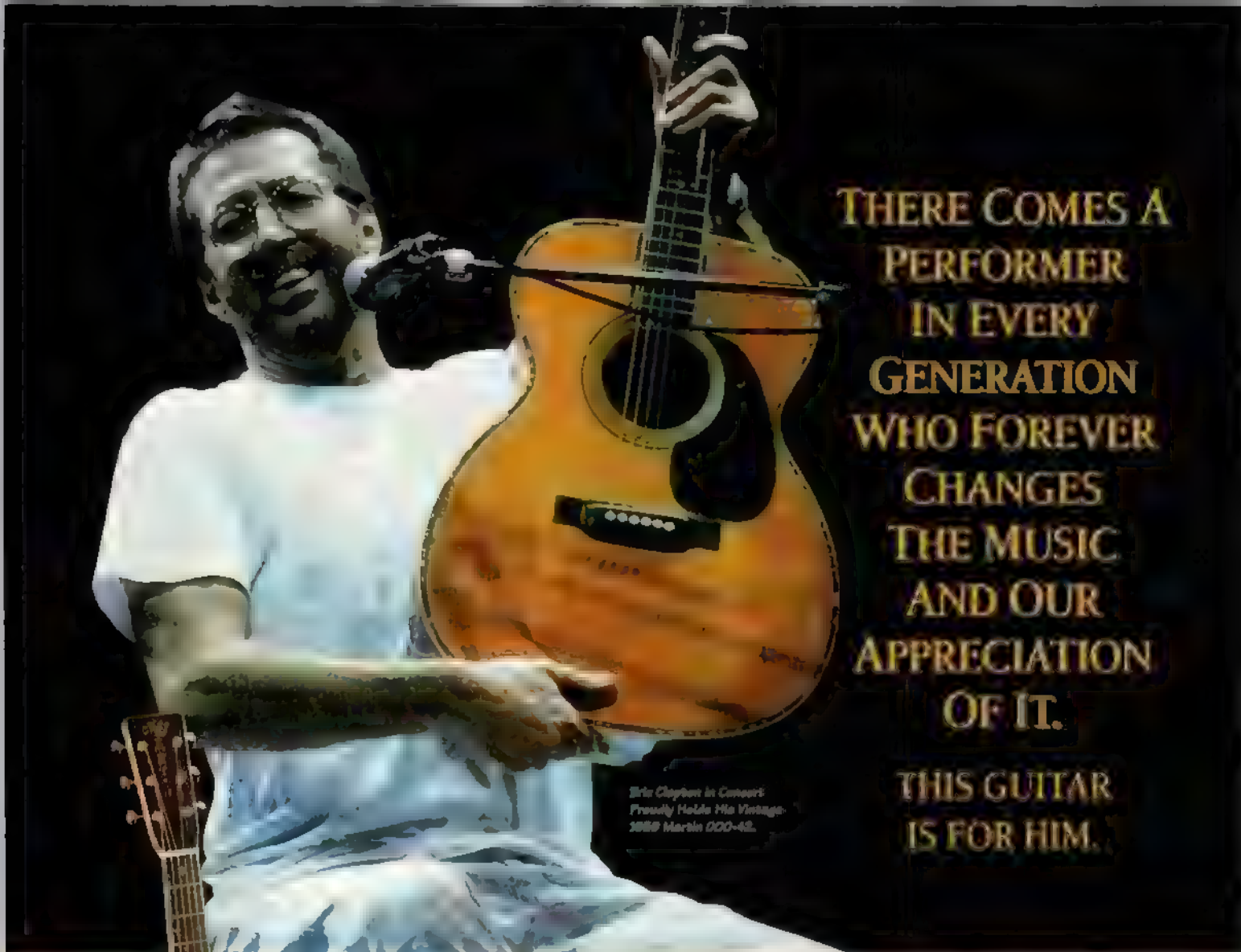


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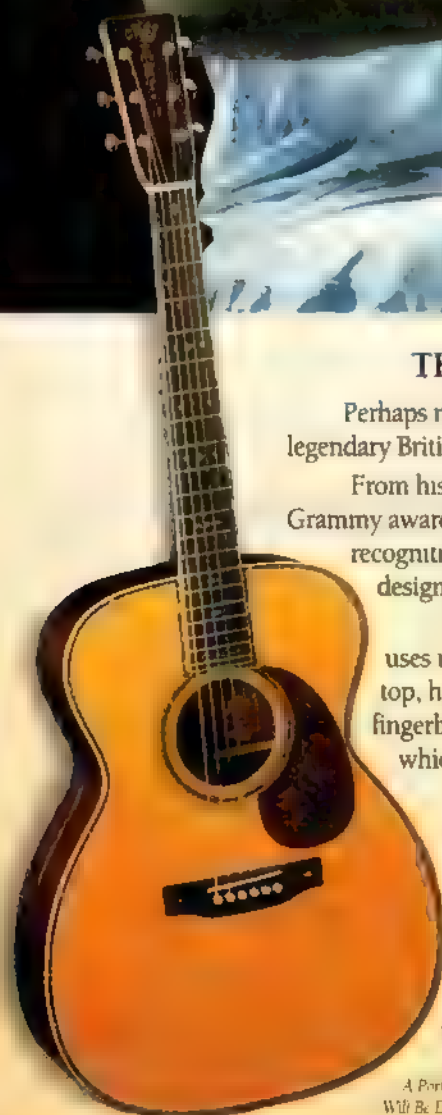
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Profile Chris Whitley



BY MIKE BAKER

“I can describe my guitar playing in two words,” chuckles Chris Whitley. “Clumsy and pragmatic. I still just make up the chords, and I’m as illiterate as hell.” If that’s the case, he makes incredibly expressive use of a limited palette. On his second album, *Din Of Ecstasy* (Columbia), Whitley proves he’s a musician uncommonly attuned to his inner voices. Throughout the aptly titled *Din*, haunting bottleneck shivers over spacious, overdriven chords that angle out in unexpected directions underneath emotive singing and powerful lyrics.

A collection of personal songs animated by inventive playing and soul-deep conviction, *Din* sounds utterly self-assured. But, in fact, the record was a long, hard time coming. “Nine years ago I was in Belgium studying how many beats per minute people danced to and trying to write accessible tunes,” recalls Whitley. “I almost raped myself creatively doing that, and I finally asked myself, ‘Why are you still playing music? You might as well work for IBM.’”

Whitley ditched his commercial direction and plunged headlong into a pursuit of his passions.

Armed with an open-tuned dobro, he returned to the States and began writing the music and honing the style that would appear on his major-label debut, *Living With The Law*. The songs on that 1991 release are a powerful marriage of stark, National-steel-based musical settings and evocative visual references, many gleaned during a year spent in Mexico. The record won near unanimous critical approval. Perhaps the only one who wasn’t totally happy with it was Whitley himself. “I was used to playing solo gigs, and I wasn’t really sure how to arrange for a band yet,” he admits. “I wasn’t as involved as I would have liked.”

After touring with Tom Petty, Whitley lay low for a couple of years, assembling his own band (Alan Gaevart on bass and Dougie Bowen on drums) and working with some major-league collaborators. He appeared on Rob Wasserman’s *Trios* album with Les

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CHRIS WHITLEY

Claypool, and cut a chilling duet on the soul classic "I Can't Stand The Rain" with jazz singer Cassandra Wilson. "I really enjoyed that," remembers Whitley. "What people sing—their whole musical slant—is really interesting to me. I love R&B singing, especially Al Green." So would he consider himself a soul singer? "Yeah, more than anything. It's what I've got stuck in my ear."

Early in 1994, armed with his band, co-producer status, and a fix on the sound he was after, Whitley headed to Muscle Shoals Studios to start work on *Din Of Ecstasy*. Where the songs on *Living With The Law* were largely acoustic-based and understated, *Din* is decidedly electric and loud, though never in a brutal or thoughtless way. "What attracts me is something different than clean guitar or power chords—I like a really beautiful chord with apeshit sounds," laughs Whitley. "That was probably the toughest thing to get: clarity on those complicated chords with all the distortion."

For a solution to this classic dilemma, Whitley turned to some established tools. "I used a Fender Tbnemaster amp, a Gibson TV '57 with P-90 pickups, and an Electro-Harmonix Small Stone pedal. I also used a '52 gold-top, and I played some stuff through a Leslie speaker." He also relied on the sweet chime of open strings; all the guitars on every song, with the exception of "Godthing," are in alternate tunings. "The limitations of open tunings have made me be more imaginative in other ways," Chris says. "That active harmonic rhythm thing is probably from playing solo, trying to be pragmatic and functional."

The opening cut, "Narcotic Prayer," gives a good idea of what he's up to. On paper, the tune has only a few simple chords, but under Whitley's fingers they expand and interlock, creating a guitar music from a parallel world. The source of Whitley's original vocabulary is not at all clear. "I grew up on what my parents had—Dylan, the Beatles, and Hendrix," he explains. "Those people were so heavy they were beyond influences. They stimulated me to do my own thing." Though he doesn't sound like Jimi, Hendrix is perhaps Whitley's most direct antecedent, a musician whose instrumental style, idiosyncratic vocals, and unique songwriting are indivisible.

Whitley's music sounds so confident that it's easy to forget he's got a lot on the line. Whitley explains that when he first chose musical integrity over b.p.m., he was working in a factory: "I was getting \$300 a week for me and my family while I was playing solo in the Village, so it's still easy to feel like I'm going to be a misfit again. Music needs to be cathartic, an exorcism, and it really balances other shit in my life. If I'm trying to let myself go and not get contrived or de-liberate, it's the best thing I can do."

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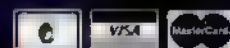
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Profile Joe Diorio

BY BILL MILKOWSKI

For years he sat ensconced in the ivory towers of academia like some mythic Buddha figure, a bebop guitar guru who rarely recorded and seldom strayed beyond Hollywood's Guitar Institute Of Technology (now the Musicians Institute). But a rash of recent releases will let many jazz guitar connoisseurs discover the genius of Joe Diorio for the first time. Italy's RAM Records (distributed in the States by Sphere Marketing, Cargo Building 80, Room 2a, JFK Airport, Jamaica, NY 11430) has released four brilliant recordings that highlight Diorio's luscious tone, uncanny legato flow, and improvisational daring.

The most adventurous of the new releases may be *Rare Birds*, a simpatico duet session with guitarist/kindred spirit Mick Goodrick, Diorio's counterpart at Boston's Berklee College of Music. "It's a landmark album," declares Diorio. "Mick is one of the best guitarists in the world. What he knows about music and what he can get out of the instrument are truly amazing. I love to play with him because he's such a great accompanist and sensitive listener. I feel very comfortable when I'm soloing with him. I can take my excursions anywhere I want and he's right there with me, regardless of how far out I take it. We did a couple of completely free things on this album—'Space Walk' and 'Rare Birds'—which are not always easy to pull off. But I thought we were really in sync."

Their interpretations of well-worn standards such as "On Green Dolphin Street," "My Funny Valentine," Thelonious Monk's "Well You Needn't," and Miles Davis' "Blue In Green" are full of surprising twists and detours that highlight Diorio's right-brain approach to the instrument. It's a sensibility he covers in detail in his 1989 REH video, *Creative Jazz Guitar*.

"The idea in improvising is to free yourself from left-brain thinking," says the 58-year-old Waterbury, Connecticut, native. "The left side of the brain wants to know exactly what it's doing through every step of the process, whereas

Diorio takes the right-brain approach on a Gibson ES-175.



the right brain is purely intuitive. It loves to take chances and be creative. And when that right brain kicks in, you'll come up with things you never thought of before, because it's not an intellectual process, but an intuitive one. If you come out playing what you already know, you're going to stay on the left side. But if you start in different places, play in different keys, or start with different rhythms, you free yourself to do something new. When I play, I try to get into a place where I never played before—or never even *thought* of playing before."

Taken to its highest levels, insists Diorio, the right-brain approach is downright spiritual: "It's like touching the other side, touching the spirit, touching the sound of God. It's touching something you can't touch or describe with anything else but music. I've had such great experiences

Continued on page 42

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Profile

Bill Kirchen

BY CHRIS GILL

The tiny Sunset Grill in Annandale, Virginia, is packed so full of people on a rainy Tuesday night that you'd think Pearl Jam was playing a surprise gig there. A mixed crowd of bikers, college girls, yuppies, and blue-collar workers focuses its eyes on the stage, where a wiry, bespectacled guitarist unleashes a mind-boggling succession of twangy low-note runs, spry pedal steel emulations, and brisk melodic leads. As the band works through swinging rockabilly grooves, honky-tonk shuffles, and boisterous country rockers, even the bartenders and bouncers smile as if they've stumbled into the hippest gig on the planet.

The band generating all the excitement is Too Much Fun, a trio that truly lives up to its name. Led by guitarist Bill Kirchen, formerly with Commander Cody And His Lost Planet Airmen, the Moonlighters, and Danny Gatton (not to mention gigs with Gene Vincent, Hoyt Axton, and Nick Lowe), Too Much Fun has become one of the hottest acts in the Washington, D.C., area.

Kirchen may be best known for playing the lightning-fast bass-string riff propelling Commander Cody's early '70s cover of "Hot Rod Lincoln," but his recent Black Top release *Tombstone Every Mile* and appearance on Nick Lowe's *The Impossible Bird* album and tour has brought him back to the attention of guitar fans worldwide. His regular gigs on the East Coast and in Texas have earned him a growing cult following. His brand of Bakersfield-inspired country, truck-stop rockers, and retro rockabilly may not be burning up the charts, but few music fans can resist his honest, unpretentious, high spirited performances.

"On a good day, I have the best job in the world," Kirchen emotes. "I'm working all the time, both here and on the road. People respond well to neat tunes that are played with enthusiasm. I don't consider myself a purist about this stuff, although I try to play 'Buckaroo' as close



Rockin' and in your face! Kirchen with Tattered Tele.

as possible to how Don Rich played it. I started listening to this stuff more than 25 years ago, so I'm in a good position to play some older twangier things that younger people haven't had a chance to hear. I think it's every bit as rockin' and in your face as the next thing."

Kirchen lists Roy Nichols, James Burton, Phil Baugh, and Scotty Moore as his biggest influences. "Hearing that Bakersfield twang really did it for me," he says. "Today I still love that stuff as much as when I first heard it. It still provides the center of what sounds right on the

Diesel-Driven Truck Stop Rocker

BILL KIRCHEN

guitar to me."

Unlike most Tele horrors, Kirchen would rather dazzle with a good melody than blazing licks. "I'm hearing a melody in my head, and I'm trying my best to get it out," he explains. "The only real constraint that I place on a song is that I've got to like it. However, I *do* plead guilty to having standard flash trick #102 that I'll drag out when it's like, 'Uh-oh. They need dazzling.' My right hand is flashier than my left hand. My left hand tends to want to play straight-up melodies. My right hand wants to play too many notes. Somewhere in between it all comes together."

Kirchen bought his road-worn Telecaster in '69 while he was playing with Commander Cody. "I only keep that guitar in a case to protect other instruments from it—so it doesn't dirty up God-fearing instruments," he jokes. The guitar's vintage is somewhat of a mystery—it has a '50s serial number (2222), but the guitar's body has a '60s-style factory three-tone sunburst. The original early-'50s pickups have been replaced by Joe Barden models. "My original pickup died in its sleep one day," Bill sighs. "I put it away after a gig, pulled it out a couple of days later, and it had gone to Fender heaven. With Tele pickups, you either have fat or twang. They're

mutually exclusive in a way. Joe's done a very good job of retaining some Fender twang integrity, while fattening it up so it doesn't sound like a banjo on the high notes."

On *Tombstone*, Bill also played a '50s Gretsch Roundup with DeArmond pickups and a Jerry Jones Danelectro Longhorn 6-string bass copy. "You couldn't get that thing away from me," he comments. "On every song I was going, 'Hey, this needs 6-string bass.' It's hard for me to think of anything that doesn't benefit from 6-string bass."

He prefers Fender Vibro-model amps, and currently uses a Vibro-King onstage, although he often plays through a blackface Vibrolux with two JBL 10" speakers or a reissue Vibroverb, modified by Joe Barden to blackface specs. Bill's only effect is a Boss analog delay set to one slap-back repeat.

Although many of the tunes in Kirchen's repertoire date back more than three decades, the material is timeless, partly because Kirchen infuses so much life into his performances. "Sometimes I feel like a folk musician, although I'm too loud to play folk," he remarks. "But I don't feel under-appreciated these days. It keeps getting better for us. I'm amazed at how down-right salable this is. We're making a good living and traveling around just as if we knew what we were doing."

JOE DIORIO

Continued from page 39

with some of my students, kids that one minute sounded like shit, then five minutes later sounded like a different guitar player just by tuning into the right brain. Some people never get over that line. But once you've experienced it, it's like steak, man. You'll never go back to hamburger again."

Diorio's other RAM releases are *Double Take*, a duet album of standards with Italian bassist Riccardo Del Fra; a session with bassist Steve La Spina and drummer Steve Bagby entitled *More Than Friends*; and *We Will Meet Again*, a set of solo guitar standards and originals. And with two great Vee-Jay reissues from the early '60s prominently featuring Joe's silky fretboard burn—Eddie Harris' breakthrough *Exodus To Jazz* and *The Better Half*—there's a veritable cornucopia of Diorio on disc. Now if only he would tour the States. . . .

"The States?" asks Joe incredulously. "It's like I don't even *live* in this country. I can go all over the world, and people know me. But I come back here and . . . forget it, man. I guess I should try to hustle me a good agent and push myself more. But we'll let some of these records circulate for a while. Maybe people will hear what I can do."

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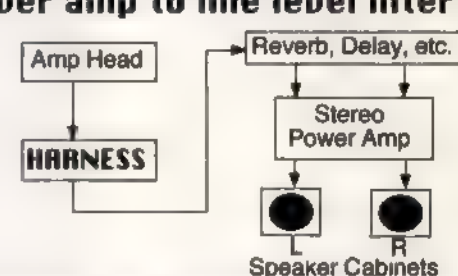
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GEARHEADS

Nat Daniel, 1912-1994

JOHN PEDEN



An early Danelectro.
Below: The man and his Sitar.

BY DAN FORTE

If you didn't know better, it would be easy to dismiss Nathan Daniel as an oddball who made el-cheapo guitars out of Masonite and vinyl. Granted, his Danelectro and Silvertone creations were inexpensive—sometimes downright cheap. In the early '60s, his short-scale, one-pickup Silvertone sold at Sears for \$67.95, complete with an amplifier built into the case. But Daniel never sacrificed quality and often came up with innovations years ahead of his competitors.

New York session great Vinnie Bell capsulizes Nat's philosophy of guitar building: "Acquire one that is respected in its field, study its attributes, create one with additional improvements, and build it inexpensively. Giving more to a consumer at a lesser price makes it possible to reach a greater range of people."

As a young man, Bell worked at the New Jersey Danelectro plant and under Daniel's tutelage designed the Bellzouki 12-string, Coral Electric Sitar, and other models. Like Leo Fender, Nat Daniel never played gui-

tar himself. Still, his list of innovations includes the first outboard reverb unit, the first tremolo circuit for guitar amps, totally shielded wiring, a 31-fret "Guitarlin," a neck-tilt adjustment that predated Fender's by a decade, and the first 6-string bass.

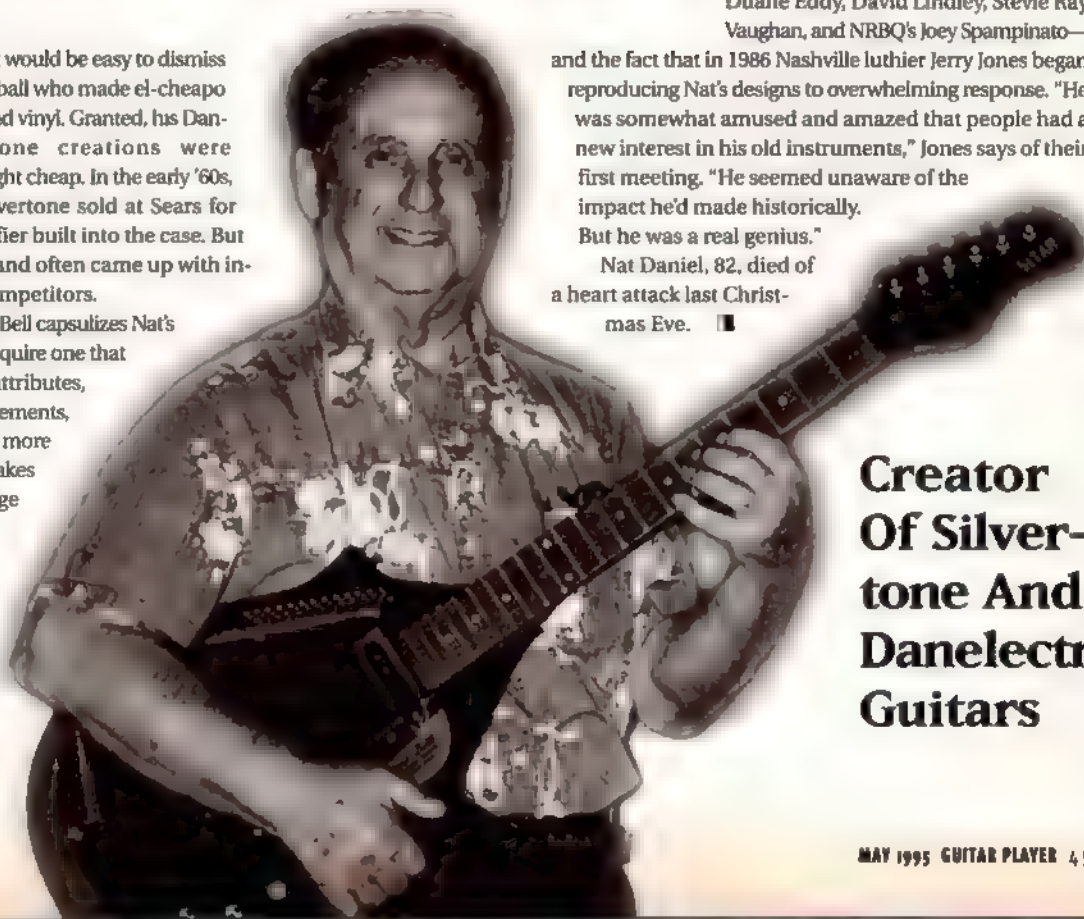
Daniel first made amplifiers for Epiphone and founded Danelectro after serving in World War II. In 1953, his contract with Sears, Roebuck (making Silvertone amps) led to his first line of guitars—first Silvertones, then Danelectros. To keep costs low, he used Masonite for guitar tops and backs, pine for the body's core, and vinyl for sides. His famed "lip-stick tube" pickup covers actually came from a cosmetics supplier.

Having sold the company to MCA in the late '60s, Daniel moved to Hawaii in 1974. Perhaps the biggest indications of his lasting contributions are the list of Dan-o players—giants like Jimmy Page, Duane Eddy, David Lindley, Stevie Ray Vaughan, and NRBQ's Joey Spampinato—

and the fact that in 1986 Nashville luthier Jerry Jones began reproducing Nat's designs to overwhelming response. "He was somewhat amused and amazed that people had a new interest in his old instruments," Jones says of their first meeting. "He seemed unaware of the impact he'd made historically.

But he was a real genius."

Nat Daniel, 82, died of a heart attack last Christmas Eve. ■



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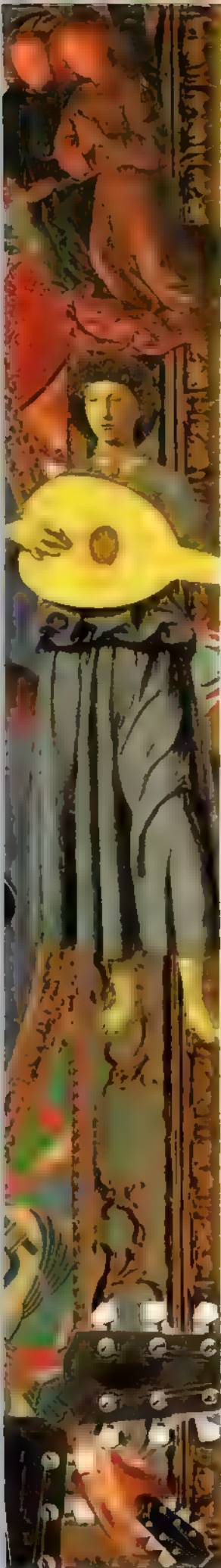
Within You Without You

the
guitarist's
search
for spiritual
meaning



Few forces are more powerful than music. It can make people smile, cry, fight, or fall in love. It can influence people to drink Coca-Cola, vote Republican, or drive a Chevrolet. It's a language that needs no interpreter. Regardless of whether the motivation is to heal listeners or make the musician rich, music has a unique capability to profoundly affect people's lives. ■ From the moment the very first note was sounded, music

By Chris Gill, James Rotondi, & Joe Olbrecht



Within You Without You

has remained an expression of its creator's soul. But this primary function of music is also one of its least understood properties. Many guitarists can define their music in great detail in technical and theoretical terms, but when it

comes to explaining the emotional impetus of their music, most give the simple explanation, "I just play from the heart." What they are saying, whether they realize it or not, is that the act of making music is fundamentally a spiritual experience.

Although music has always been a central element of religion—the Bible contains more than 50 references to music or musicians, and the gods and goddesses in Indian religion and myth are all musicians—spiritual music is not necessarily religious music. Spirituality may often be related to or channeled by religion, but the two are not unconditionally intertwined. "Spirituality is like an ocean," says Carlos Santana. "When you put your toe in one ocean, you've touched all of them. Religion is like Mus-

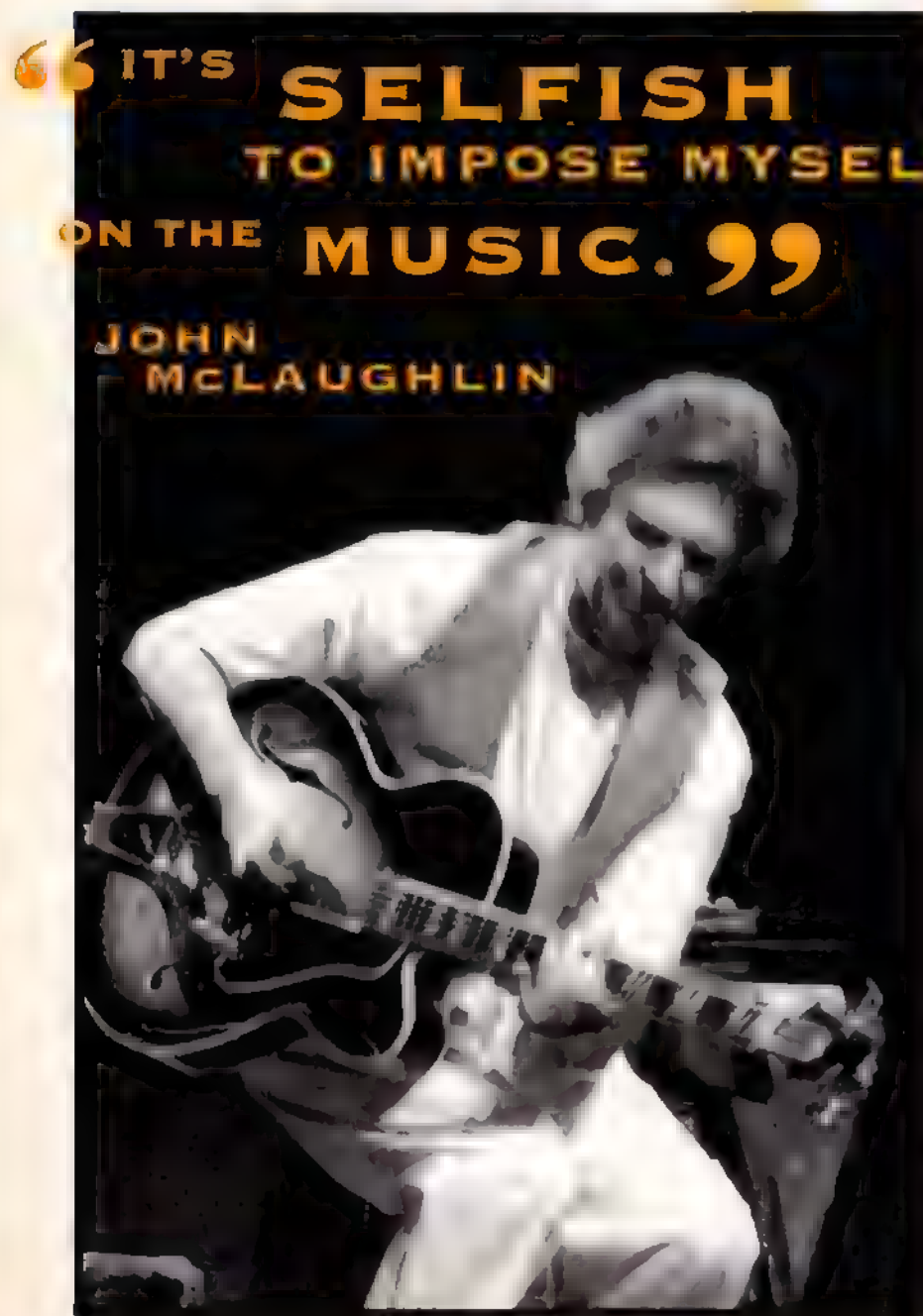
lim or Christian. Spirituality is only one love—a love supreme."

The essence of spirituality is an awareness of a higher form of inspiration, one that comes both from within and without. Religion may help a person achieve a heightened state of spirituality, but a person can be spiritual without being religious. "Religion is politics, not spirituality," observes Celtic/blues guitarist Martin Simpson. "Whatever you're doing, if you're getting into the spirit of the thing, you're being spiritual. People say, 'I'm not a spiritual person,' but you can't *not* be a spiritual person. You can define what spirituality means, and you can not like what somebody else has defined for you, but you can't help being a spiritual person."

New York avant-guitarist Elliot Sharp warns that it's dangerous to talk about spirituality, especially if you are trying to define it. "For me a spiritual feeling is one that *can't* be defined," he says. "There are as many definitions as there are people. Maybe it's that part of the brain that we haven't quite integrated into our consciousness. That's the great thing about it—you can't really know. I know that there's this other feeling that comes in with certain kinds of music, but it's hard to be very exact when you're speaking about these things. In the ancient Hebraic bible, even spelling out the name of God was the worst thing you could do, and I see that as cutting to the essence of the thing—as soon as you start to define spirit, you lose it."

Steve Tibbetts, a progressive jazz guitarist who records for ECM Records, expresses similar concerns: "You run into all these problems when you talk about music and spirituality, because you don't know what you're talking about. Some people can be clear about it, but it's real treacherous ground when you talk about spirituality and art, because if your art isn't spiritual, then there's nothing to talk about; if it is, there's *still* nothing to talk about. I really don't want to hear about other people's spiritual awakenings, because it's their *pure expression* that wakes up my spiritual longing. When you talk about that spiritual element, you invite the danger of spiking the drink that people are getting. I'd rather let electricity be electricity and not have to trace it back to some power plant."

Though their approaches differ, many players argue that to become a truly effective musician, it is necessary to devote as much effort to developing the spiritual side of music as to mastering the technical aspects. Santana feels that musicians can develop spiritually once they recognize the difference between playing to complement and playing to impress. "That's the spiritual path in a nutshell," Carlos explains. "You can play to bring people together, or you can play to say, 'Check this out!' In order to experience spirituality, you need to illumine your ego, because your ego is like a horse. You don't have to kill him, but you have to enlighten him so he



doesn't run away and throw himself off a cliff with you on him. Basically the ego is a good thing—it's pure dynamism. Why don't you make it work for you and with you?"

Because spirituality is inherently personal, one of the primary steps towards achieving spiritual awareness is to look inward instead of relying on external sources for approval. "It's better that we try to feel secure about ourselves," says Eric Johnson, "rather than looking to an external thing to tell us what we're supposed to be. When you turn on the TV and see a perfume commercial—that's 100% externalization: 'Oh, we're not quite as pretty as that person. We don't smell quite as nice, and we're not glamorous and living on the French Riviera.' All of a sudden we're subtracting from the internal. Time and time again it's been shown that the real spiritual building blocks are inside of us. If we have a little bit of self-love and self-esteem, we get messages from within of what intuitively feels right. Then we can say, 'I love playing rock and roll, but maybe I want to say something a little different. I don't have to say what these other guys are saying. I don't have to chase that carrot.'"

Looking inward does not mean withdrawing from others and becoming self-centered. Steve Vai feels that by looking inward a person can develop a meaningful relationship with God, which in turn can greatly affect how he views the external world. "Whether you believe in God or not, your relationship with God is extremely personal," he comments. "Probably more personal than you can even imagine, and more so than any relationship you can have with another individual. In the search for this elusive God, we reach towards all these things in the world that might help us to reunite with this thing. We express ourselves through this desire, and it comes out in love, anger, art, and music, in the way we relate to our friends and family, and the way we feel about ourselves—whether we have a happy life or we put a bullet in our head.

"The true path to spirituality is to get closer to that spark or God, whatever it is. There are a lot of different realms, religions, and so-called spiritual worlds out there, but they could be deterrents to our real spirituality, just like other things in this world are. Just because things exist in other planes of existence doesn't necessarily mean that they're good for us. The greatest thing that we can achieve is that single-pointedness of mind to go within."

The act of making music is a remarkably effective manner of looking inward. Concentrating, focusing, and listening, which are requirements for becoming a good musician, are necessary for exploring the inner being. For many, the act of playing is a form of meditation that allows separation from thought. "Meditating and playing are very similar kinds of concentration, and you even get similar physical reactions," notes David Torn. "Playing is my only regular form of meditation, and there's definitely something in it that's completely out of my hands. For me the whole thing is spirituality—this is how I better myself, how I have a positive effect on the world. It's beyond the limitations of my thinking and my own agenda."

The connection between music and meditation is timeless. According to Indian violin virtuoso L. Shankar, who accompanied John McLaughlin in Shakti and currently plays with Peter Gabriel, many of India's ancient Vedic texts describe music as the highest form of meditation. "Learning and acquiring the skills to play music is important," he comments, "but when the real thing comes, you are like a medium for what is passing through you. Your state of mind, your physical state, and your spiritual state have to be fit enough in the high-



**“ INSTEAD
OF PROBLEMS,
YOU GET
POSSIBILITIES.”**

**CARLOS
SANTANA**

Within You Without You

est sense to receive that. There must be a balance between those three things. You have to be very clear. There is a life in every note, and to achieve that is a matter of learning concentration, not simply practicing. To be able to let things go and concentrate on nothing—that is the ultimate thing. Meditation helps you to listen, and also to stop listening."

One way that guitarists achieve a meditative state is to let go of their inhibitions and concerns and simply play. Musicians who do this often describe the sensation as "becoming the instru-

ment," as opposed to playing the instrument themselves. "When I walk out onstage, I want inspiration to take everything that I have, everything that is me," John McLaughlin describes. "If I can get out of the way, if I can be pure enough, if I can be selfless enough, and if I can be generous and loving and caring enough to abandon what I have and my own preconceived, silly notions of what I think I am—and become truly who in fact I am, which is really just another child of God—then the music can really use me. And therein is my true fulfillment. That's when the music starts to happen. And that's part of my process in my own spiritual life—to become more selfless, because it's selfish to impose myself on the music."

Robert Fripp feels that the best way of letting go is to take the attention away from the act of playing and simply relax. "I try to be in a place where music can more freely play the human instrument," he remarks. "There is a creative impulse, and if I were insensitive, I wouldn't be aware of it. So I have to develop my sensitivity. If I were tight and tense, I wouldn't be able to respond to that impulse, so I train my hands to

respond very quickly to an impulse."

For some musicians, the act of letting go has enabled them to have transcendental experiences. "One time I was playing at a festival in Northern England," recalls Martin Simpson. "The moment that I started to play, all the nonsense went away, and I felt really able to focus. The next thing I knew, I was actually in mid-air above the stage watching myself perform. I was really aware of the separation. I was going, 'Wow! Look at him go. What an incredible job that guy is doing.' I don't know how long it went on. It was astonishing. It never happened before, and I don't know if it will ever happen again. I'd like it if it would."

"I lose myself at some point during almost every musical performance," says Torn. "There's some point of struggle and super self-consciousness, but I always get lost at some point. If I don't, I have a really bad time. While I'm playing, there's a pattern of struggling through something and then cracking through it by a weird combination of willpower and letting go. That's the most enjoyable thing for me: 'Uh-oh, he's gone! Finally, the guy can't talk!'"

“THE GUITARISTS WHO HAD A REAL EFFECT ON ME WERE SEEKING SOULS, SEARCHING SOULS.”

STEVE
VAI





For Carlos Santana, playing from the heart is a means of achieving transcendence: "When you play from your heart, all of a sudden there's no gravity. You don't feel the weight of the world, of bills, of anything. That's why people love it. Your so-called insurmountable problems disappear, and instead of problems you get *possibilities*."

Sometimes the experience can be transcendental for the audience as well, as people who are not musicians often encounter spiritual enlightenment while listening to music. "Not all of us have experience in forms of organization or producing music or singing," Robert Fripp says. "But we all have access to the quality of music, the spirit of music."

David Torn has had transcendental experiences while listening to records or watching other performers. "When I listen to certain records, I'm transformed and moved to places that I wouldn't normally go," he remarks. "I certainly don't get that from watching television or a movie or trying hard to make money. The first time I saw the Mahavishnu Orchestra, I was so high on the music that I was barely in my body; I could barely contain myself. Something evolved, my forward path shifted, and I felt better."

The psychological effect that music can have on an audience places the performer in a unique position of power. John McLaughlin feels that music's beautiful, spiritual, and unifying powers should be used for affecting people in a positive manner. "It's such a mysterious and wonderful

thing," he says. "People love it everywhere, so why don't we use it to bring a greater understanding to the people of the planet? If music can remind people where they truly belong in the consciousness of love and kindness—which is truly God-consciousness—then it might be a small contribution, but at least it's a positive one. All we can do is help each other, to remind ourselves that in the midst of all this anguish there is a sanctuary, that everything is all right. Music can do that. It is a healing force in the world."

There has been a great amount of study into music's healing properties, but no one has been able to pinpoint a particular form of music that is more effective than another, probably because music is a highly individualized experience. The same music affects different people in different ways. But most musicians agree that if the intent is positive, the outcome will be positive.

"If our motive is to instill good, positive, healing force in our music—something that will elevate the listener—then people can pick up on it on a sublime level," says Eric Johnson. "It doesn't matter what kind of music it is—it can be the most raucous thing in the world or just a couple of notes on a classical guitar."

"Nouveau flamenco" guitarist Ottmar Liebert has talked to many people who thanked him for the pleasure his records brought them while they were hospitalized. "It's so nice that people still have that awe that music can do so much," he marvels. "I know that much of my life has been formed by certain pieces of music, and to be able

to do that for somebody else is wonderful. If you can move people, that's what it's all about."

Pops Staples comments that his main effort as a musician is to try to help people. "I'm trying to make my music do something constructive," he explains. "Music is healing to the soul, a healing to the feeling of the people. I'm trying to get peace here between the United States and the people. I can't figure out why there's a difference in people. Some have and some have not. I'm trying to sing a song that says together we stand and divided we fall. If you're keeping one nationality down, sooner or later you're going to be down there with them. The only time you should look down on a person is when you're lookin' to pick him up. Everybody is somebody. If you're a president or a drunk walkin' the street, everybody is a human being. God loves all of us the same."

But music can also affect people in a negative manner. Although playing the blues can help musicians exorcise the demons of everyday life, for many decades the blues was viewed by a large segment of society as inherently evil. Historically, many African Americans in the South found it prudent to denounce the blues as "the devil's music," a notion that goes back nearly a century. "When I was a kid," said Delta bluesman Johnny Shines, "if people heard you singing the blues and recognized your voice, you couldn't go down their house, around their daughters."

Early blues recording artists such as Robert Johnson and Peetie Wheatstraw, a.k.a. "The Dev-

Within You Without You

il's Son-In-Law," worked the devil angle for self-promotional purposes, while other early blues recording artists such as Rube Lacy and Robert Wilkins denounced blues altogether and became preachers. Near the end of his career, Son House, the inspiration for Muddy Waters and Robert Johnson, was able to reconcile playing both blues and gospel. "I'm sitting here playing the blues, and I play church songs too," he reported in 1967, "but you can't take God and the devil along together. Them two fellows, they don't communicate together so well. They don't get along so well. The devil believes in one way, and God believes in a different way. Now, you got to separate them two guys. How you gonna do it? You got to follow one or the other. You can't hold God in one hand, the devil in the other one.

**“PEOPLE SAY, ‘I’M NOT A
SPIRITUAL
PERSON,’
BUT YOU
CAN’T
NOT BE
A SPIRITUAL
PERSON.”**



**MARTIN
SIMPSON**

You got to turn one of them loose. Which side do you think is the best?”

Because music can affect an audience so deeply in positive and negative ways, many feel

that musicians must take responsibility for the emotions they evoke. This controversy has taken many musicians off the stage and into courtrooms and Senate hearings to defend their mu-

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sic. (This dilemma is not new. Many classical composers' works were deemed "too terrifying" for children. At the premiere of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* in 1913, the audience became so riled up by the music that a riot broke out. More recently, musicians have been accused of influencing people to murder, commit suicide, kill police officers, and become drug addicts.)

Martin Simpson believes that a musician has considerable responsibility to an audience willing to surrender to the music. "A dictator desires to create the same effect as a good musician," he explains. "When I get onstage with a guitar, whether I'm alone or with a band, I can create the most astonishing feelings in people. I can make entire audiences literally weep, shout, or think. In performance, there is a conduit where



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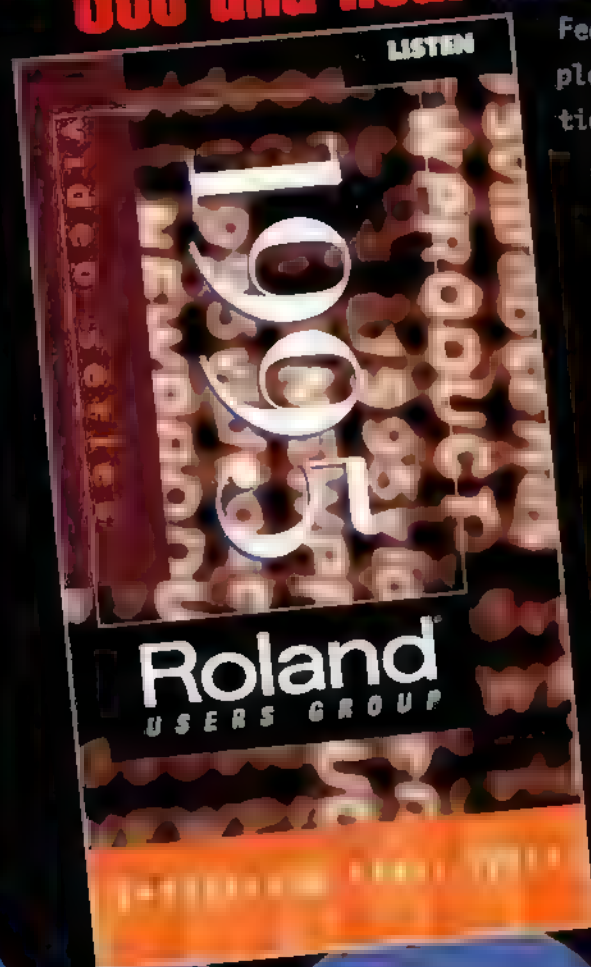
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Within You Without You

the energy that you give the audience comes back to you. It is magnetized greatly and truly becomes an exchange of spirit."

The musician, he feels, is ultimately responsible for his own actions, not those of the audience. "My responsibility is to try to be true and genuine and to express what I feel are important matters that can perhaps make a difference. All of what I do is my best expression, my best musicality, my best communication. That is my spiritual path."

Nevertheless, the musician's spiritual role is a source of disagreement among guitarists. Some feel that musicians are today's priests, whereas others think that a musician is no more important than a doctor, waiter, or street sweeper. "The cobbler's beautiful pair of shoes shouldn't be any different than a great work of

music by Penderecki or Stravinsky," says Eric Johnson. "I used to think that maybe music would work on a more grandiose level, but ultimately it's not a savior. And that's good, because it puts everything into more of a soulful, human perspective. Although art might give us chills and make us think more of wonderful things, if we spent our whole life delved into it and then expected it to solve our whole human existence, it would be elusive."

Guitarists in particular are often perceived as spiritual figures, largely due to players like George Harrison, Pete Townshend, and John McLaughlin, who have closely and publicly aligned themselves with spiritual gurus. "It's become such a cliché," comments Steve Tibbetts. "All these guitar players turn into such spiritual guys—it doesn't happen to bass players! A lot of guitar players embrace a teacher or religion or sect, and then they give all these interviews, and it comes out like some weird salamander."

Martin Simpson states that this perception has a great deal to do with the guitarist's role in the band. "Guitarists tend to attract more attention," he illustrates. "Bass players and drummers don't get interviewed as much; they don't stand in the front of the stage and become the focus. Guitarists and singers are usually the ones who direct the spirit of the band. A lot of selection goes into putting a band together, trying

to create unity and something that is a functional machine. A good band has a focus of spirit, and each band member is equally important in projecting that spirit."

Steve Vai thinks that spiritually oriented people are drawn to the guitar because of the instrument's nature. "The guitar is an extremely emotional instrument," he reasons. "There's no other instrument that allows you to bend the notes or manipulate sound like this. There's something about the vibrations of the guitar that attracts certain people. We tortured souls who are trying to express ourselves in the spiritual realm, and don't know how to do it, may naturally gravitate to the guitar. We may think that we believe in something or not, but ultimately we're searching. When I look back, it seems like the guitarists who had a real effect on me were people who, in a sense, were very driven—maybe centered, or maybe tortured—but seeking souls, searching souls."

Many people who are searching for meaning in life often turn to music for answers. In turn, they often become musicians. But can existence as a musician provide insight into the meaning of life? "The world is craving spirituality so much right now," says Carlos Santana. "If they could sell it at McDonald's, it would be there. But it's not something you can get like that. You can only wake up to it, and music is the best alarm."

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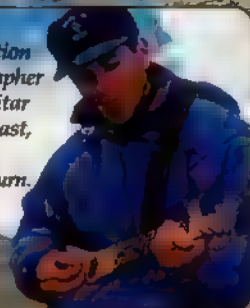
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FEEDBACK

Continued from page 16

recall seeing him was when he graced the cover of your January '76 issue. He is truly a master guitarist who does not give himself nearly enough credit. Joni, on the other hand, seems to have a fatter head than her old cohort. As much as I love her, her claim that none of the contemporary "new folk" artists can touch her smacks of conceit. Sounds like David Crosby was right when he said, "Take it from guys who know—Joni Mitchell is about as modest as Mussolini." Joni, stop being such a cranky old lady and lighten up a bit, huh? And mind your

health a bit more too.

Michael Leonard
West Haven, CT

Apologies To The Don

In your January '95 article on Sol Hoopii, you rename Don Helms "Jimmy Helms"! You also state that Jimmy Helms duplicated Hoopii's solos note for note with Hank Williams' band. Don has always used E6 tuning and says Leon McAuliffe and Little Roy Wiggins were the steel players that he tried to emulate. I have most of Hank Williams' recordings featuring Don Helms, and I've never heard anything that sounds like a note-for-note copy of Hoopii. By the way, Don

still plays on the road with Hank Williams' daughter, Jett Williams, and does session work whenever a Hank Williams sound is wanted.

Tim Ausburn
St. Charles, MO

Chasing Dragons

Well done to Ben Fisher and *Guitar Player* for the fine Peter Green article/inter-view [Nov. '94]. For those of us who consider the Green-Kirwan edition of Fleetwood Mac that group's apex, this was a long awaited and much savored update. I was happy to read that this influential guitarist/vocalist has found some bit of peace, retaining his sense of humor.

It is unfortunate that Danny Kirwan declined to be interviewed. (Anyone who hasn't heard "My Dream" and "Like Crying" from *Then Play On* should track down a copy.) Perhaps reading about Kirwan's present condition, and sadly, Peter Green's, will give younger readers pause before messing with repopularized drugs like acid and mescaline. I don't pretend to know what role drug use played in either man's premature career eclipse, but it's clear from the Green interview that mescaline had a profound and negative impact on him, as he never recorded top-notch blues/rock again. Still, what Green's Fleetwood Mac produced was magnificent, as was Mr. Fisher's sensitive interview and the accompanying pictures (though I'd like to see one of Peter Green playing a Harmony Mentor!).

Jim Larzelere
Whitmore Lake, MI

Oops!

Egnater's Mega-Drive mod (March '95) suffered from a less-than-exact parts list. Here's the updated version. We apologize for any confusion this may have caused.

Resistors:

1 2.7M
1 1.5k
1 68k
2 100k
1 10k

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1 .0047/400V (minimum)
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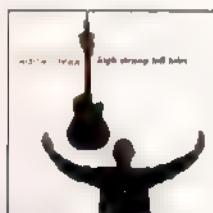
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April 26
Thoroughbred Music, Clearwater, FL
April 27
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April 28
Reliable Music, Charlotte, NC
April 29
Audio, Light & Musical, Norfolk, VA
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Guitar Center, Roseville, MI
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Guitar Center, Arlington Hts., IL
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Griggs Music, Davenport, IA
May 25
Strings and Things, Memphis, TN

May 26
Morrison Brothers, Jackson, MS
May 30
Lentine's Music, Richmond Hts., OH
May 31
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Schmitt Music, Minneapolis, MN
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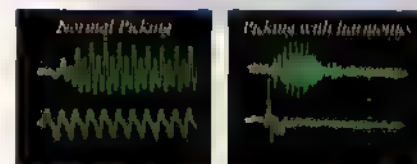
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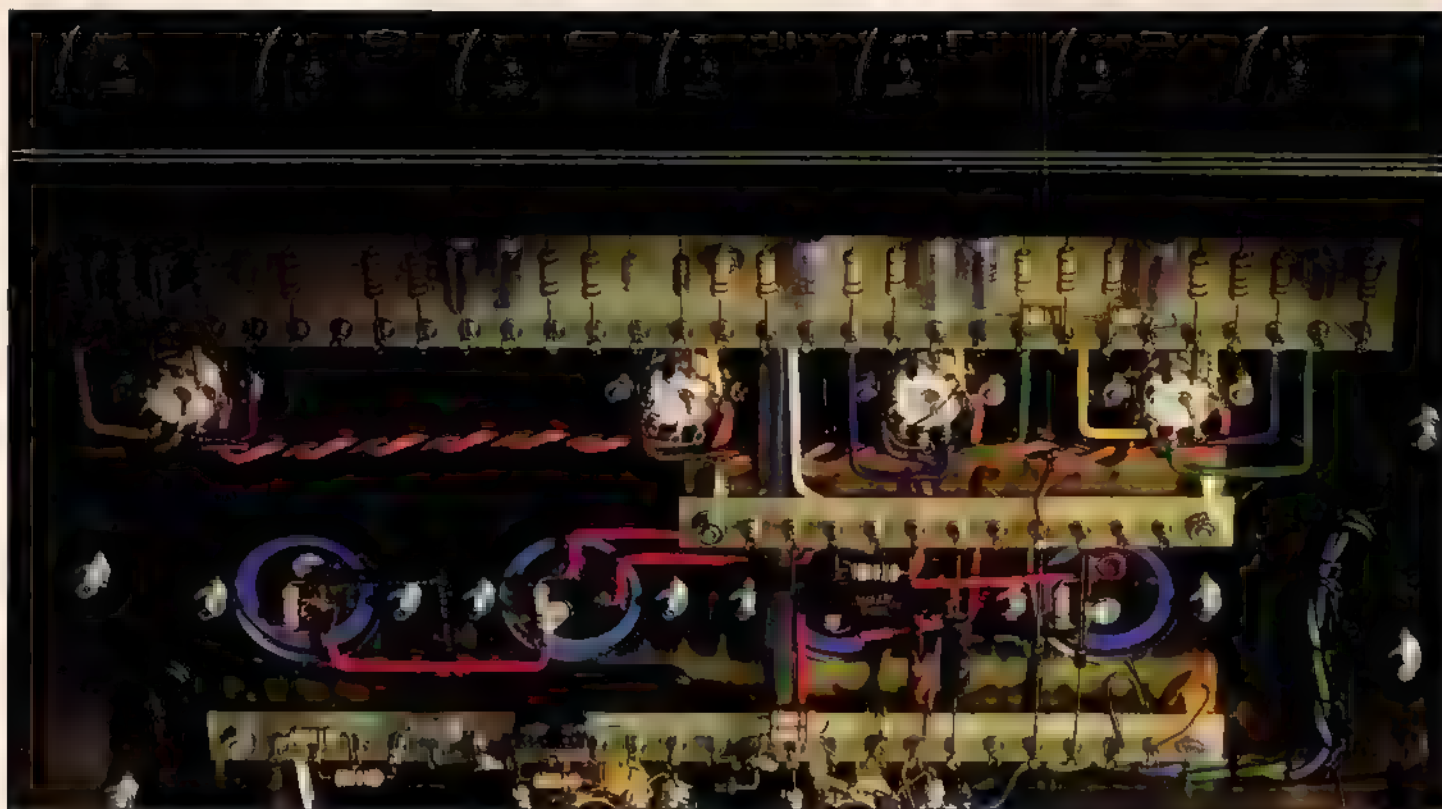
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Slash's New Band Shakes Up The Ranks

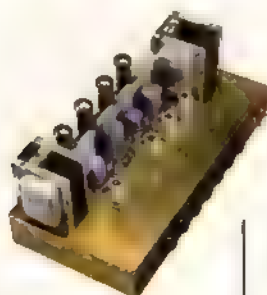
By Chris Gill

Forget the rock star persona that has dominated Slash's image ever since Guns N' Roses hit the big time. Slash is a musician first and foremost. He may be accustomed to Lear jets and limos, first-



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SNAKE N' BAKE

class hotels, and four-star restaurants, but when he talks about playing guitar it's obvious he'd be just as happy if he were still sharing a Hollywood apartment with four other bandmates, sleeping on the floor, eating macaroni and cheese, and riding the bus.

In the middle of Guns N' Roses' struggle to determine the direction of its next album, Slash decided to form his own band, make a record, and set out on a small-scale tour that will take him to clubs instead of sold-out arenas. He sounds genuinely thrilled as he describes a whirlwind promotional tour where he crossed the country in a van and visited as many as three radio stations a day to play acoustic versions of his new songs. His enthusiasm is so overwhelming that it's easy to imagine him stuffing envelopes in the record company's mailroom, sending copies of his new album to radio and the press.

Slash has good reason to be enthused. Slash's Snakepit, featuring Guns bandmates Matt Sorum on drums and Gilby Clarke on guitar, ex-Alice In Chains bassist Mike Inez, and vocalist Eric Dover, formerly a guitarist with Jellyfish, is a tight, hard-hitting band. Their Geffen release *It's Five O'Clock Somewhere* is raw, simple, and direct, with melodies you can hum—not unlike classic Aerosmith, Led Zepelin, and Appetite-era Guns N' Roses. Although Slash's rock-solid riffs and tasteful, bluesy solos form the record's foundation, the album is a true group effort.

Kicking back in a New York hotel suite on Super Bowl Sunday with a drink in one hand and a phone receiver in the other, Slash flashes his characteristic grin as he completes one of a seemingly endless string of interviews and prepares to start the process all over again.

• • • • •

What made you decide to do a solo album?

Everybody thinks this is a solo record, but that's not what it is at all. It's a band. It was ini-

tiated by me because I'd written the guitar parts, but then Matt and I got really involved with arranging stuff. Mike wrote his own bass parts, and Gilby wrote his own guitar parts. It's not what you'd call a wham-bang fuckin' guitar solo record. It doesn't have the blistering licks from hell. Unfortunately I think some kids might expect that. I've never been one of those guys who wants to solo for longer than he should. My solos complement the song, which is the most important part. But having said that, it's a very guitar-oriented record.

Is the album's title a reference to happy hour?

I picked that up from a guy at an airport bar on the way to London to do the Donnington festival about seven or eight years ago. It was ten in the morning, and we were all shagged, beat to shit, and in bad moods. I went to the bar and asked for a double Jack and Coke. I said, "I know it's only ten o'clock." The bartender leaned over and goes, "It's five o'clock somewhere, pal," with a big smile and sincere eyes. All of a sudden it dawned on me, "That's the quest! Where is it five o'clock?" [Laughs.] I never forgot that. Because all of us in this band are second fiddles in all the bands that we're from, when it came time to title the record that popped into my head. That's basically what it is for us. It's not just about a bar, and it doesn't have to relate to alcohol. It relates to life in general. We're doing everything day by day. It's my way of handling everything—getting up in the morning and handling what you have to do that day. Make some plans for the next day and keep going forward, but not to the point where you plan out the rest of your life. You just keep working towards a hazy goal until it starts to come into focus. Then you find it's a lot easier. Then you just have to deal with the 24 hours that you're in the middle of at the time. It takes a lot

of pressure off

How did this record come about?

When I started, there was no concept of Snakepit—that was the name of my home studio. I was just recording stuff, like a kid in a candy store, fiddling with knobs. That whole home multitrack thing can get you a little excited. I was writing stuff, and Matt would come over, not so much as a bandmate, but because we're friends. We'd hang out, sort of like how attorneys and managers will hang out on the golf course, but we'd be playing. We started recording some cool shit, and we had 17 songs, almost all of them in their entirety. Then Gilby came over, and then Mike Inez

popped up out of nowhere and got involved. All of a sudden I said, "We've got a cool band here." So I booked some time over at Conway Studios, and we went in and whipped out 14 of the songs in 12 days. Then we looked for a singer and finally found Eric. He was the 41st singer we auditioned. The first song that he wrote the lyrics to was what we called "Song in D," which was a work title, and he wrote "Beggars And Hangers-On." You know that magical feeling of "this is it"? There was no more searching.

Wasn't this material supposed to be for the new Guns N' Roses record?

I was just writing the way that I write. A lot of stuff that I wrote for the *Use Your Illusion* records, you don't even know it's there. The kind of material that I like is on this record, which I would have loved to have been a Guns N' Roses record, but that's not the direction that Axl wanted to go in. I was really amazed that Axl was like, "No. I want to sound like Pearl Jam." I was like, "Okay. I'm going to keep this stuff." That's where I got the concept of making a record out of it. I didn't know where I was going. I never seem to know that. I just stick my foot somewhere and take it from there.

Your performance sounds spontaneous and natural.

I didn't have any prewritten solos. When we did *Appetite*, we had rehearsed those songs and played them live for so long that it was easy to reproduce them. I didn't have to write a whole bunch of new stuff when we went into the studio because we had played all that stuff live. But when we did *Use Your Illusion* I pretty much improvised, except I wrote solos for "Estranged" and "November Rain" because they're ballads, and they needed it. For this one I just winged it.



SWAKE N' BAKE

Did you use different guitars on each song?

No. I used what I consider my main guitar, which is the zebra-striped Max Les Paul. The only time I used anything different was for a song called "Back And Forth Again," where I used a Strat for the solo. And I used a couple of custom Strats made by Sammy Sanchez in L.A. that I played on the road with Guns. I used one for the end solo on "What Do You Want To Be." Aside from the acoustics, everything else was just the one Les Paul, which is really

refreshing because when we did *Use Your Illusion* I acquired so many guitars that I was just toying around with all of them. On this thing I went straight back to one guitar, although I also used my Guild acoustic on a few songs. This record is really basic. There's nothing odd on there—the wah-wah pedal and the voice box is a standard that I always pull out somewhere. The same with Gilby. He just used one guitar—a Zemaitis—and his Voxes. He might have hooked his Voxes up to his Marshall, and

that was about it.

Did you play the slide on "Beggars"?

Yeah. I play it with a lighter when I do it on acoustic at these radio stations. For the record I used an old Gibson lap steel made of korina wood from the days of the old Vs and Explorers. Adam Day (Slash's guitar tech) bought me that for my birthday. I played it with an Ernie Ball steel.

"Be The Ball" has a Sex Pistols rhythm. Was that inspired by the punk covers you played on The Spaghetti Incident?

Some of these things came up so quickly that I never gave it much thought. To us it sounds like Cheech and Chong. Just to give credit where credit is due, I used a Crybaby on that,

which is one of the newer Ernie Ball released Crybabies. It's fully adjustable. The ones I used to use onstage with Guns N' Roses had a mike cable in them, and I had five of them onstage. I hated them only because they were so big, and the depression width was really weird. Instead of being subtle it was very extreme, which was great for "Civil War." These new ones are fully adjustable tonewise, gainwise, and so on, so I actually got to execute what I would consider a good wah-wah pedal sound with a regular

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fuckin' wah-wah pedal.

There's not too many ballads on this record.

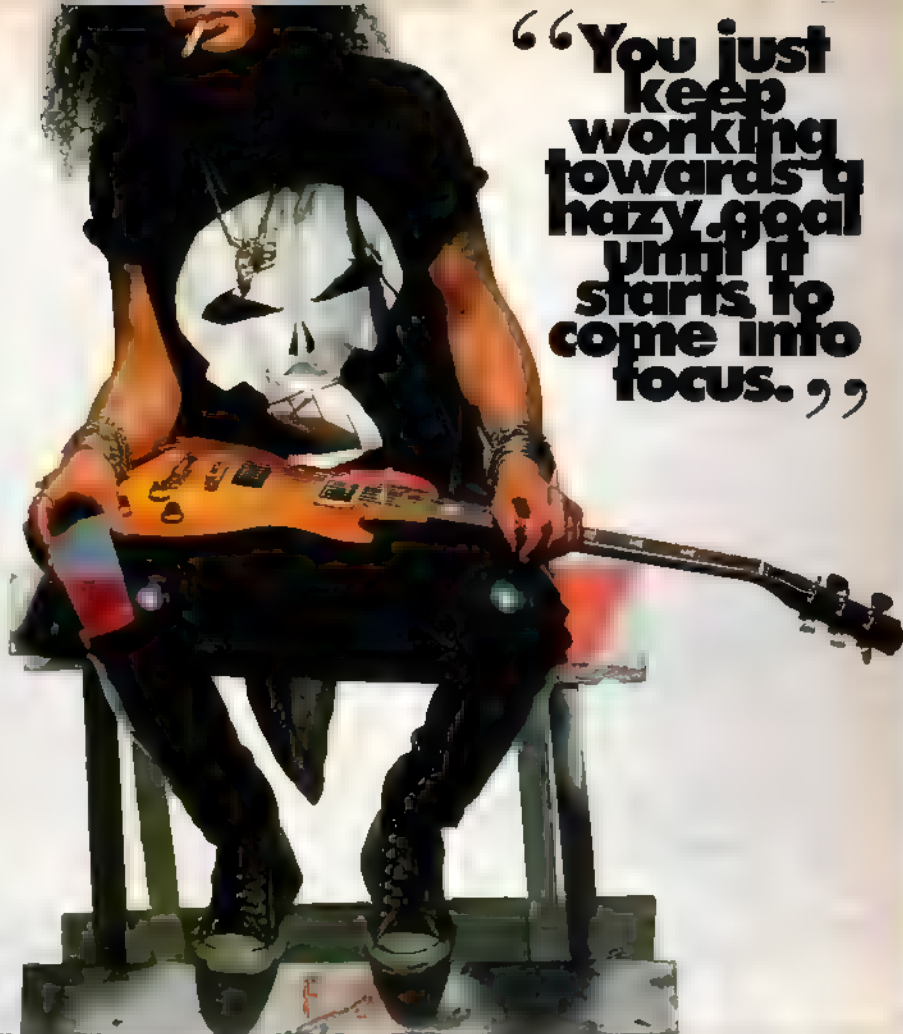
No. One ballad for me is always enough. Zeppelin's records in the old days were filled with acoustic stuff—that's a style they're good at. I love to write music like that, but only one or two at the most on a record. I concentrate on the more aggressive approach. For example, "I Hate Everybody But You" is the closest I can get to a love song. [Laughs.]

Have you done any other side projects?

I did a soundtrack for a movie called *The Black Panthers*. It's not virtuoso guitar playing by any means. I played my version of "The Star Spangled Banner." I played it note for note, as opposed to trying to do the Hendrix version, although you can hear some influences of Hendrix in some of the note choices. There's some blues stuff in there, but it's very slow, and I played the exact melody from the original so I held a standard for the movie. It sounds really strong the way it is without any guitar dive bombs or all that shit. Everybody's tried to do that. I ended up adding a couple licks here and there that are very mellow, but they sound good. It's got a lot of vibe to it.

Other than that I didn't do much of anything other than dealing with Guns and Snakepit. I did Michael Jackson again, but with Michael you never know what's going to be on the

“You just keep working towards a hazy goal until it starts to come into focus.”



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record. I've been talking to Iggy Pop about writing with him, but my schedule is such that I might have missed that one by now. It's a good thing that I've been doing so many outside projects where I'm so adaptable that I can play with almost anybody, within reason. All that

experience of working with different people, in different studios, with different engineers and producers, not to mention musicians and so on, really is worth it. You might not think about it at the time. It just seems like fun. Looking back on it, it's really important for you to be able to take that experi-

ence and use it to your advantage.

Why did Gilby get kicked out of Guns?

I got a phone call from Axl after Gilby, Duff, Matt, and I had come home from rehearsal. He was adamant that he didn't want to write with Gilby, and he wanted to explore some other

kind of writing approach. He's always had this vision of teaming me up with a guitar player that's going to stretch my boundaries, whereas I still come from the old Guns N' Roses school where I do what I do and he does what he does. Getting two lead players to meet eye to eye is difficult, not to mention overflowing the record with self-indulgent guitars. I told Gilby about this. He was never officially kicked out of the band, but I think the feelings were so strong, and Gilby was so taken aback by the whole thing, that he was a little confused. Then he had words with Axl and Duff, and that more or less cemented his position out of Guns N' Roses. Then he went on to do the Gilby Clarke project. Gilby and I have always been the closest of friends. I will never really understand why that happened, and that was the first thing that instigated a separation between Axl and me. And that's why there's still a hole in the band to this day.

The next Guns N' Roses record is going to be interesting because of all that's happened since Use Your Illusion.

Everything is interesting. [Laughs.] There's no cohesive concept between us as to what a Guns N' Roses record is supposed to sound like. Guns is something that's close to my heart. I'm loyal to the day I die, I suppose. After touring for two-and-a-half years it was really nice to get back to where I'm at right now, which is more or less street level, dealing with things off the high-profile rock star concept that Guns is. It's nice to be here. I went to a bar the other night, and there was some band playing. I got up and played with this other guy's guitar, and Eric started singing. The kids were going nuts. That was a hell of a lot of fun. Guns misses that. Unfortunately we can't do that. We could if we all wanted to, but when Guns is on the road and we have a day off, I'm the one who goes and finds some bar band to jam with—Duff as well. Matt usually comes with me. But Guns as a whole can't do that.

It's amazing that Guns has lasted for almost ten years.

Can you believe it's been around so long? As far as Guns' material goes, I'm still very enthusiastic and loyal about doing Guns, but the band is such an institution at this point that I don't see any need to affect the creative process by adhering to the time schedule and pressures from the record company—and public, for that matter—and putting out a shitty record. It's not like Guns has to make a record next week. The band is already established. In August after I get back from tour, I'll go back and see where Guns is at and where our relationship as a functioning band stands. If we all missed each other and the music happens and the work flow is going and everything pours out, then we can make a natural record. I don't believe in anything other than that. ■

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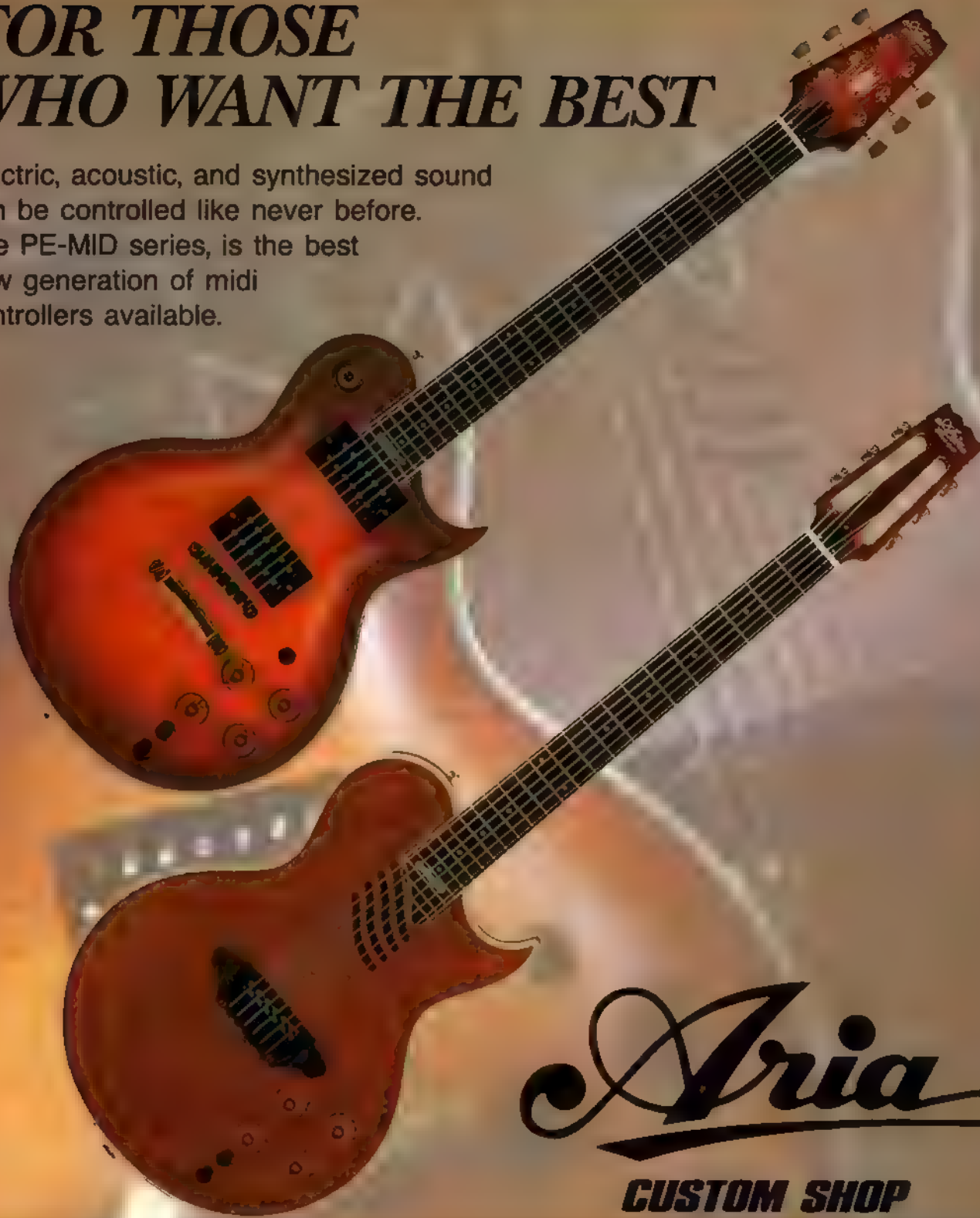
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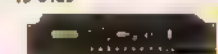
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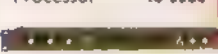
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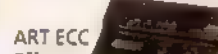
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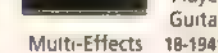
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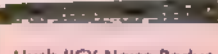
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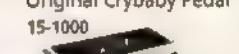


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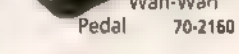
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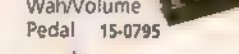
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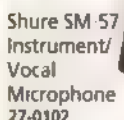
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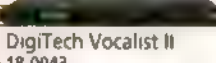
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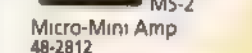
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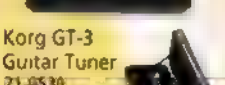
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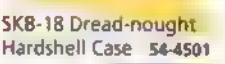
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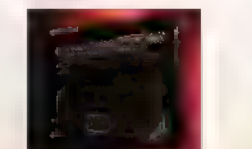
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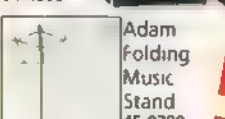
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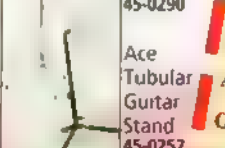
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THE GREAT DIVIDE



Helm, Danko, Robertson, Hudson, and Manuel rehearse at Big Pink, 1969.

BY KEVIN RANSOM * PHOTO: DAVID GAHR

When Eric Clapton introduced The Band at the 1992 Bob Dylan tribute concert in Madison Square Garden, he anointed them with the highest praise imaginable. "Back in 1968," he enthused, "I heard a record called *Music From Big Pink*, which changed

my life and changed the course of American music." ■ During their 16 years together—eight years as the Hawks and eight years as The Band—guitarist Robbie Robertson, bassist Rick Danko, organist/saxman Garth Hudson, drummer Levon Helm and pianist Richard Manuel



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demonstrated bristling chops and spot-on rhythmic intricacy. They could also play with subtle, muted delicacy. And as heard on their recently released *Across The Great Divide* and *Live At Watkins Glen*, The Band also favored loose-limbed, intentionally rickety arrangements that, in a live setting, sometimes threatened to spin out of control.

Across The Great Divide is a sprawling, stirring reminder that The Band's most compelling and impassioned music—primarily from 1968's *Big Pink*, 1969's *The Band*, and 1971's *Stage Fright*—evoked autumnal, deep-woods sounds and rustic images of a bygone America. The 56-track box set demonstrates the musicians' ability to stir a roux of influences—Chicago blues, Appalachian bluegrass, Memphis soul, Nashville honky tonk, Cajun two-steps, Dixieland jazz, Southern gospel harmonies, Salvation Army band marches, Anglican hymns, tent-show stomps, and even Bach fugues and toccatas—into something utterly their own. Rare or previously unreleased tracks deliver some raucous guitar moments. Robertson's barbed-wire solos on "Who Do You Love," Chuck Berry's "Back To Memphis," Little Richard's "Slippin' And Slidin'" and Bob Dylan's "Don't Ya Tell Henry" flaunt chops he tends to downplay in his own songs.

In recent months The Band has enjoyed greater visibility than at any other time since the original lineup called it quits in 1976. *Jericho*, the reunited Band's first new recording in 15 years, features Jim Weider, who's replaced Robertson. Last year The Band gigged at Woodstock '94 and undertook its most extensive tour since the mid '70s. Meanwhile, Robertson released his third solo album, while Danko's second trio project with Eric Anderson and Jonas Fjeld is slated for a spring release.

Their return to the spotlight has been aided by two Band biographies. The more controversial is Levon Helm's *This Wheel's On Fire*, in which Helm accuses Robertson of taking sole writing credit for songs that Helm says he and other Band members co-wrote. Culled from separate conversations, the following interview with Robbie Robertson and Rick Danko includes their views on the box set, the *Big Pink* and *The Band* sessions, and the group's legacy and present viability. With markedly different recollections, they also address Helm's accusations.



What was your reaction to Levon's book?

Robbie: I didn't read it, because I heard it was a lot of sour grapes, and I thought, "Oh well,



**"I BEGGED THE GUYS
TO GET INVOLVED IN THE
WRITING, BECAUSE I
WAS THE ONE WHO WAS UP ALL
NIGHT BANGING MY HEAD
AGAINST THE WALL
TRYING TO WRITE THIS STUFF."**

ROBBIE ROBERTSON

whatever." I've got too much else to think about for that kind of stuff. It's just been so long. I mean, I love Levon dearly and I always will, for all the tremendous times we had together, but really, you'd think he'd have more interesting things to think about in his life by now. I guess he blames me for breaking up The Band, and I suppose that's partly true, but he didn't say why. I didn't do it on a whim, believe me. You know, I called him up a couple months before the book came out, rather naively, to talk about the box set and how we should get together and play some music together. And he said, "Yeah, that sounds good to me," like everything was hunky-dory. He didn't say, "Hey, look, I've got this book coming out."

Rick: When The Band broke up in '76, it was just time to bring the old ship in and grow a little bit. Robbie wasn't the only one who wanted to do other things. Before *The Last Waltz*, I signed a production deal with Clive Davis to do my solo shows. Sometimes it breaks my heart when I remember that, in '76, Warner offered us a \$6 million dollar deal to do an album a year, and we passed. But there's more to life than being able to live off your royalties. Ego is a funny thing, and after the first two or three albums, The Band pretty much became a Robbie thing, so there was conflict there.

Levon also claims that Robbie took total writing credit for songs that he says you and the other

THE BAND

guys contributed to. Is that the way you remember it as well?

Rick: Yeah, there was a lot of that. A lot of those songs were Levon's stories, without a doubt. And as far as the music, yeah, it was very much a collaborative effort on those first two albums. So there was a little greed there on Robbie's part—a lot of greed, actually. But that's behind us now. It really seems like that was another time.

Robbie: Listen, I begged the guys to get involved in the writing, because I was the one who was up all night banging my head against the wall trying to write this stuff. And just because someone's in the room when a song is being written doesn't mean they helped write it. Don't get me wrong—Levon and Rick and Richard contributed tremendously to the arrangements and to the sound of those records, and there's no way to explain how important Garth was in terms of taking us to new places musically.

But, I'm sorry, it's just not true. And in a few cases, I thought I was more than generous when someone was in the room while I was writing a song.

Levon admits that most of the guys were fairly whacked out on various substances at the time, which can sometimes affect the way people perceive and remember certain events.

Robbie: You want me to tell you something? That was the biggest problem in The Band and many other bands of the era. I didn't know anyone who wasn't completely fucked up at the time. And with The Band, it started very early on—way before the *Stage Fright* sessions—and it never went away again. As a result, making records became very painful. These were, and are, very talented guys, and it was a joy to hear them when they were on their mark. But then when you go into the studio and everyone's not really there for it, it bruises you in your soul. So if you want to know why I didn't want to go on the road with these guys any more and why The Band had become this pathetic, drug-infested, dysfunctional organization and why I thought we should bring it to a conclusion, then read his book.

And believe me, I was no angel during that period, but, to put it really bluntly, I was just more scared than they were. I didn't have the balls to try everything that they were willing to try. It was almost as if it had become this experiment to see how close to the edge of the cliff you could drive without falling off.

When The Band re-formed in the mid '80s and it seemed like everyone was much cleaner, weren't you tempted to go back on the road with them?

Robbie: No, I didn't buy that for a minute. And Richard died as a result of it. [Author's note: Manuel, long plagued by chronic drug and alcohol problems, hanged himself in the bathroom of a Florida motel room in 1986 while The Band was on the road.]

Music From Big Pink and The Band had a timeless quality that the critics said would still hold up 25 years down the road. Well, the time's up. What do you think of that assessment today?

Robbie: Actually, it strikes me very similarly. Before we started putting together the box set, it had been many years since I listened to the music I made with The Band, except what I'd hear on the radio now and again. And when I listened to it again, it really did sound like music that never really had its own time. Those songs didn't sound timely when we recorded them, and they don't sound timely now. I thought, "Wow, this music really had its own niche—it didn't have anything to do with anybody or anything." With a lot of artists' music, you can hear a little of this, a little of that. But I still don't know where The Band's music came from, and I like



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that about it—I'm proud of The Band for that.

The box didn't include as many previously unreleased tracks as some of us had hoped. I understand there were some lost tapes. What was on them?

Rick: In '68, after we recorded *Big Pink*, we rewarded ourselves by going into Gold Star Studios, this famous old studio in Hollywood, and having some fun on some old blues and country and R&B stuff—"My House Ain't But A Mile And A Quarter," "Sitting Here A Thousand Miles From Nowhere," "Back At The Old Country Shack," "Liza Jane," that sort of thing. But Capitol was cleaning out their shelves one day, and they didn't think we wanted 'em, and they all got thrown out. Then, in 1970, right after Bearsville Studios were built in Woodstock, to check it out, we went in and recorded another bunch of covers. But those tapes burned up in a fire at Garth's house in L.A. years ago.

When you listen to the classic Band songs today, do they reveal anything that didn't strike you at the time?

Robbie: Yeah. What didn't strike me at the time but what I can hear now is that these were really strange arrangements. [Laughs.] They were actually non-arrangements. This wasn't a band where each guy played one specific role.

We'd just keep passing the ball around, swapping instruments and vocal parts and trying different arrangements until there was something about it that we recognized, not by having anything to compare it to but just by continuing to discover the song until it sounded like the official version, or like the real thing—whatever the hell the "real thing" was.

Some of The Band's most beautiful and compelling songs—"The Weight," "Rocking Chair," "Acadian Driftwood," "King Harvest"—had a frail, wobbly quality that I mostly attributed to Garth's keyboard playing.

Robbie: Well, Richard Manuel had some wobble to his piano playing as well, but it was also because of the way Rick played the bass. He was almost re-inventing the instrument. He didn't play bass like anyone else at the time. He played fretless bass way before it was popular, and the way he played it, it almost sounded like a tuba with strings on it.

Rick, were you consciously trying to sound different from everyone else, or did your bass style just develop instinctually?

Rick: I was mostly influenced by the great Motown bass players, like Phil Upchurch and James Jamerson, and Edgar Willis from Ray Charles' band. And yeah, some tuba players as

well. But I just tried to listen and play in the spaces, to hook up with the bass drum and leave some space for the backbeat to hit. If everyone plays on the same beat, you can't hear each other. So I tried to play in front of the beat in a way that didn't rush it, or behind the beat in a way that didn't drag it. The Band was very good at listening to each other, working out the arrangements in a very economical way, and making it add up so that you could not only hear the sum of the parts, but feel it as well.

"King Harvest" is a good example of that, with the bass and the bass drum playing together—ba-boom, ba-boom. Then the backbeat, boom, with the bass and bass drum hitting on the one and then the backbeat hitting on two. It was another way of adding space to the equation. Sometimes it's not what you know, it's what you leave out. It's funny—when I was about 17 years old, Garth told me, "Go see a music teacher." And I was a cocky kid, so I said, "What do you want me to learn?" And he said, "Well, in the first place, you're only playing the neck with one finger. You gotta use all your fingers." So I went to a teacher, and it took me a couple of visits before I could play a perfect scale. That might be one of the best pieces of information anyone ever gave me. [Laughs.]

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BAND

How critical was the fretless bass to your developing such a fluid, agile style?

Rick: I didn't start out as a bass player. Ronnie Hawkins originally hired me as a rhythm guitarist. I was infatuated with the sound of the slide guitar, and I also played the violin. So I'd use a comparable motion on my Ampeg fretless by sliding up to the note and then stopping at the bridge. Edgar Willis' work on the stand-up acoustic bass also influenced my fretless playing. It was another way of making me really listen. It forced me to concentrate on the pitch and being in tune. I also played a Fender bass in the old days, but now I play three custom-made basses. The Guitar Workshop in Norway built me a 4-string and a 5-string, and Mark Denn from New York City also made one for me. They all use Olympic pickups, which I really like. I think Phil Lesh from the Dead uses them too.

Robbie, the box-set track of Ronnie Hawkins' "Who Do You Love" showcases your screaming, vicious guitar style from the early '60s. Can you remember what your reference points were?

Robbie: I was only 16 when I hooked up with Ronnie, and usually at that age you just steal

everything that you like. But I quickly found that I was really terrible at copying. Even if I studied a particular riff, it was always a pain in the ass for me to figure out. So I just developed my own variation on the theme—not because I was trying to be original, but because I couldn't do the other thing. As I accidentally tripped over ideas, I found that although I was definitely flailing, I was also discovering something new and inventing something, because no one else was playing like that at the time. Plus, that violent style also had a lot to do with my impression of Ronnie's music, which always struck me as quite violent and vicious. But we could be cool and subtle too—sometimes in the same song. The dynamics of the Hawks' music at that time were very exciting.

Of course, the imagery in that song—"I got a tombstone hand and a graveyard mind"—really cry out for those cold, metallic guitar shards.

Robbie: Well, I thought so.

But with Big Pink and The Band, you went in a more economical, groove-conscious direction

Robbie: See, with Ronnie, I played a solo in every song. And then when we hooked up with Bob Dylan for the 1965 and '66 tours, I played even more solos. Bob had never played with a band before, not as far as I could tell [laughs],

and we were like this newfound musical toy for him. He'd sing a couple of verses, look over at me, and I'd solo. Then he'd sing another verse, look over at me, and I'd solo. After the final verse, he'd look over at me again, and I'd solo to end the song. So by the time of The Band's first album, I was soloed out, and I'd gotten to a place where, for me, it was about finding the right emotion, and I figured my role was to support that emotion. I got so I just wanted to play parts and grooves instead of solos.

Your "King Harvest" solo is a study in sonic minimalism. Is it true that you turned your amp down to the lowest possible setting?

Robbie: Yeah, that's right. I was sitting with my amp literally right beside me, because we recorded it live in a small room and I didn't want my guitar to leak into the other mikes. At the time, I was still playing my Tele, which I played for years before switching to the Strat in 1973. I liked the Teles because we were on the road a lot, and they were so durable you could pound nails with 'em. Anyway, I was plugged into 't old Gibson amp with a very dry, low-fi sou with no top and no bottom. Typically, you real had to crank these things up to get them to speak, but "Harvest" didn't call for that. I wanted a dry sound, so that the bass and drums and guitar all seemed like they were coming out of

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the same speaker.

On the live tracks from the 1975 Watkins Glen festival, you're really cutting loose again. The intro and solo on "Back To Memphis" have that stuttering sound that recalls your playing on Before The Flood

Robbie: I suppose if you get away from something for a while, it's always more enjoyable to come back to it again. And Watkins Glen was so loose and bizarre, you felt like you could just do anything. But it was all done very instinctually. On "Back To Memphis," I could sort of remember the solo from the original, but not exactly. So I just played a variation on it according to my memory, instead of getting the record out and learning it—which I'm actually very opposed to. Because if it's going to be exactly the same as the original, then I'd rather hear the original. But if you're going to do a variation, then do a variation, you know?

Rick, you've always played acoustic guitar in your solo act. How have your years of playing the bass affected your approach to the guitar, and vice versa?

Rick: To this day, I still learn a lot from my acoustic shows—just from going up there and having to keep the thing together by myself. I said earlier that Ronnie Hawkins hired me to be a rhythm guitarist, but I really didn't play rhythm before I joined the Hawks—I was a lead guitar player. But over the years, playing the bass has made me into a pretty good rhythm player. In my acoustic shows, there's a lot of bass going on. I tune my guitar down a full step, and I'm actually just playing bass lines with some chords on top. Most of my movement is on the bottom strings.

Is it true that "The Weight," which could well be The Band's most stirring and beautifully constructed song, was on the "B" list during the Big Pink sessions?

Robbie: That's true. It was. We'd tried it a number of different ways, but we weren't that excited about it. So our attitude was, "Well, just in case something else isn't working, we've got this song to fall back on." So we were in the studio, and just out of trying to not be boring, we said, "Well, let's give that 'Take a load off Fanny' song a shot." And very quickly someone suggested that maybe Garth should play piano and Richard should play organ, because it seemed like there was room for some fills that would sound more natural coming from the piano than the guitar. So they swapped, and we recorded it. It wasn't until we listened back to it that we realized, "Holy shit, this song's really got something."

Rick: Ironically, since Levon had just come back into the band when we got signed to Capitol, that was the only song he sang on *Big*

Pink—Richard and I sang the rest. Of course, at the time we had no idea how big it was going to become. We were just doing our best to make music that had rhythm and soul.

The reunited Band toured on and off throughout the '80s, but didn't release a new album until late '93. What took so long?

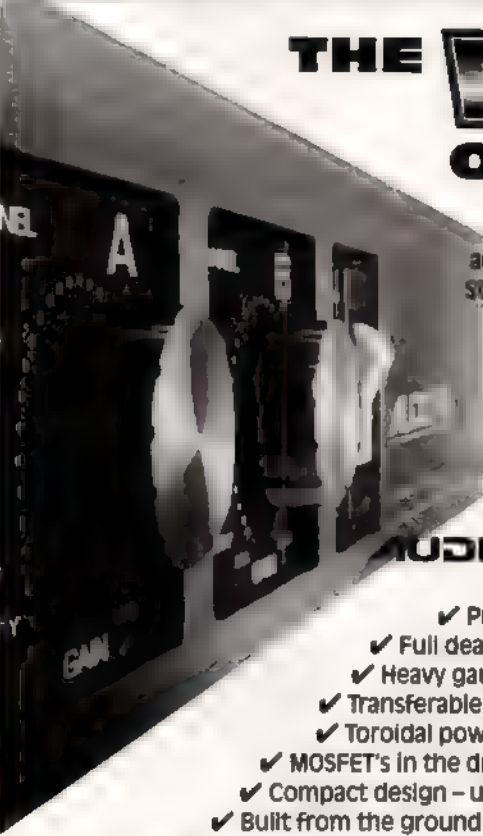
Rick: Everyone just wasn't ready, and the seed money wasn't available. We had a few false starts—there was a clash of personalities with label people who were trying to tell us how to make records. But The Band is The Band, you know? We weren't going to put up with that.

But we were very happy with *Jericho*, which was made the way the first two Band albums

were made, in that it was very much a collaborative process. Everyone contributed. Right now, we're getting ready to do the next Band album up here in Woodstock, and we've got a lot of really strong original material together. Some of it is left over from our false starts in the '80s and early '90s. Everyone is living a more healthy lifestyle, so we're much more focused. And we played together more in '94 than we have in 20 years, so the unit sounds fantastic. But, for me, the most important thing is being involved again. Making new music with Levon and Garth again is just so... They're such incredible musicians, and I'm honored to be able to share my life with what they do. ■

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STEVE VAI RETURNS
TO EARTH WITH
ALIEN LOVE SECRETS

STAR MANN

BY JAMES ROTONDI

It's a stunning Martian landscape. Large, pendulous green fauna rise from the depths of murky orange swamps. Gigantic seeing eyeballs hover ominously above the . . . toilet? Snap out of it, man. It's just the groovy paint job in Steve Vai's *guest bathroom*—you're not really on Mars at all. • Out in the backyard garden, the 34-year-old guitarist (born 6/6/60—yikes!) is swinging his toddler Fire around like one of his monkey-handled guitars while six-year-old Julian cruises the veranda with a pail and shovel. "Hey guys! Who got their hair cut?"

PHOTOGRAPHY: NEIL ZLOZOWER

SPACE PHOTOS: ORION—C.R. O'DELL/BICE D./NASA; M100—J. TRAUBER/JPL & NASA

MAY 1995 GUITAR PLAYER 35



Steve asks, noticing their fresh, darling bowl-dos. Papa Steve recently cut his hair too—it's short for the first time since his teens. (Part of a guitar god haircut conspiracy—they're all in on it.) Still, there's nothing particularly alien about *this* landscape. Is this really the cosmic ax-demon himself?

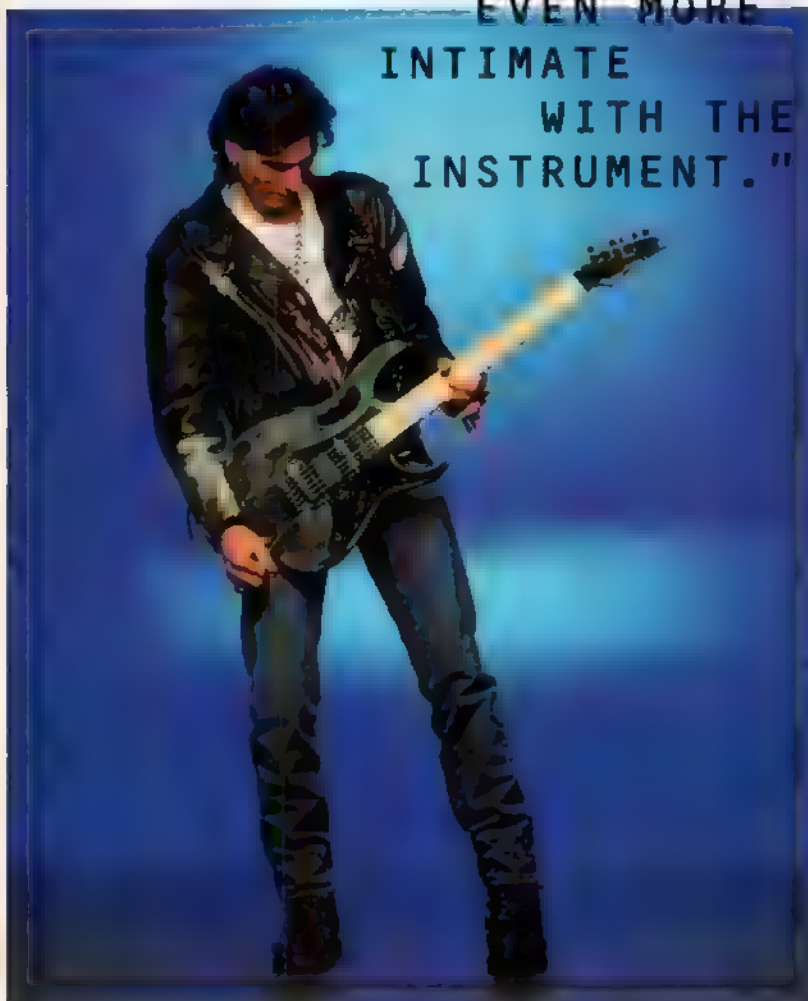
It would appear that after years of reaching for the stars, Steve Vai has returned to Earth. His new seven-song Relativity EP is called *Alien Love Secrets*, but it may be the earthiest piece of wax he's produced in an incredibly diverse career. You know the story. At age 18 he joined Zappa's band after Frank tapped him as

a transcriptionist. He released the groundbreaking solo LP *Flex-Able* and starred as Jack "Devil Boy" Butler in the film *Crossroads*. Between stints with John Lydon and L. Shankar, he replaced Yngwie in Alcatraz, replaced Eddie in David Lee Roth's musical affections, and replaced Viv Campbell in Whitesnake. Best of all, he provided the quickie shred licks every time the two San Dimas dudes played air guitar in *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure*. In 1990, Steve released his breakthrough album *Passion And Warfare*, which, by virtue of its unsurpassed virtuosity and range, was a milestone in heavy instrumental guitar. It seemed like the guy couldn't miss.

But Vai's follow-up, the ambitious *Sex & Religion*, wasn't the success he'd hoped for. Though the record sold respectably and boasted some gorgeous guitar, the project was, by his own account, an "abysmal disaster." Intended as a true band recording

Continued on page 89

"I WANT TO DIG DEEPER.
I WANT TO BECOME
EVEN MORE
INTIMATE
WITH THE
INSTRUMENT."



ANALYSIS & TRANSCRIPTION BY STEVE VAI

AS TOLD TO JESSE GRESS

In an age when most guitarists care little and know even less about written music, it's inspiring to discover Steve Vai's genuine love and enthusiasm for the art. He suggested we augment our cover story with a score reduction for the soaring "The God Eaters," a short, harmonically dense and richly melodic piece that closes "Kill The Guy With The Ball" on his new *Alien Love Secrets* EP. Within a week, amidst a busy recording and press schedule, Steve delivered a work copy followed by the final, handwritten manuscript you see here. Scored for harp, guitar, voices, synth strings, and glockenspiel, "The God Eaters" is as beautiful to the eye as it is to the ear.

Whether you read notation or only tablature, studying this exclusive score will further your awareness of modern compositional techniques and notational practices. For maximum benefit, keep a copy of Gardner Read's *Music Notation* at hand while you study and analyze the music.

Brave souls will want to try playing some of Steve's parts. Here are a few pointers: This piece is notated at concert pitch, so be sure to raise the melody one octave when playing it on guitar. The harmony hasn't been voiced for guitar; performing the chords requires several players or a multitrack recorder. Try tipping the harmony stacks over to create a custom scale for each chord. You'll find most of the melody notes present within the harmony.

After delivering his manuscript, Steve discussed the rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic strategies he used to compose "The God Eaters," as well as his thoughts on the art of music notation. —JESSE GRESS



"I was listening to what I'd recorded on 'Kill The Guy With The Ball,' and when that last low E came in, I just heard

INSIDE THE GOD EATERS

Score

"The God Eaters"

S. VAI

Handwritten musical score for "The God Eaters" by Steve Vai. The score is written for a guitar ensemble, with parts for Lead Guitar, Top 4-5 = Vox, Synth Pads, and Stereo Pads. The score is divided into four systems, each with a measure number in a circle (1, 4, 7, 10).

System 1 (Measures 1-3):

- Lead Guitar:** Starts with a $D^{(13)}$ chord, followed by a $D^{(13)A^{\#}}(no3)$ chord, and ends with an $A^{\flat}(b13)/D$ chord.
- Top 4-5 = Vox:** Features a melodic line with a $\#F^{\#}$ note and a $\#F$ note.
- Synth Pads:** Includes a $Fm^{\#}/D$ chord and a $D^{(13)A^{\#}}(no3)$ chord.
- Stereo Pads:** Includes a $D^{(13)A^{\#}}(no3)$ chord and a $D^{(13)A^{\#}}(no3)$ chord.

System 2 (Measures 4-6):

- Lead Guitar:** Features a $D^{(13)A^{\#}}(no3)$ chord, a $D^{(13)A^{\#}}(no3)$ chord, and a $C^{\#}/D$ chord.
- Top 4-5 = Vox:** Includes a B^{\flat}/D chord and a $C^{\#}/D$ chord.
- Synth Pads:** Includes a B^{\flat}/D chord and a $C^{\#}/D$ chord.
- Stereo Pads:** Includes a B^{\flat}/D chord and a $C^{\#}/D$ chord.

System 3 (Measures 7-9):

- Lead Guitar:** Features a $D^{(13)A^{\#}}(no3)$ chord, a $D^{(13)A^{\#}}(no3)$ chord, and a $D^{(13)A^{\#}}(no3)$ chord.
- Top 4-5 = Vox:** Includes a $D^{(13)A^{\#}}(no3)$ chord and a $D^{(13)A^{\#}}(no3)$ chord.
- Synth Pads:** Includes a $D^{(13)A^{\#}}(no3)$ chord and a $D^{(13)A^{\#}}(no3)$ chord.
- Stereo Pads:** Includes a $D^{(13)A^{\#}}(no3)$ chord and a $D^{(13)A^{\#}}(no3)$ chord.

System 4 (Measures 10-12):

- Lead Guitar:** Features a $D^{(13)A^{\#}}(no3)$ chord, a $D^{(13)A^{\#}}(no3)$ chord, and a $D^{(13)A^{\#}}(no3)$ chord.
- Top 4-5 = Vox:** Includes a $D^{(13)A^{\#}}(no3)$ chord and a $D^{(13)A^{\#}}(no3)$ chord.
- Synth Pads:** Includes a $D^{(13)A^{\#}}(no3)$ chord and a $D^{(13)A^{\#}}(no3)$ chord.
- Stereo Pads:** Includes a $D^{(13)A^{\#}}(no3)$ chord and a $D^{(13)A^{\#}}(no3)$ chord.

"Kill The Guy With The Ball/The God Eaters" written by Steve Vai © 1995 Sy Vy Music (ASCAP). International Copyright Secured All Rights Reserved

Handwritten musical score for guitar, featuring four systems of music. The notation includes chords, melodic lines, and performance instructions.

System 1:

- Chords: $B^{\flat}(9)/D$, $B^{\flat}(b13)/D$, $E(9)/D$, $E^{\flat}(11)/D$
- Performance instruction: $C^{\flat}(b9)/D$ (Add block)

System 2:

- Chords: $E(11)/D$, $F(11)/D$, $G^{\flat}(7)/D$

System 3:

- Chords: $F^{\sharp}(9)/D$, $F^{\sharp}(10)/D$, $F^{\sharp}(11)/D$, $D^{\flat}(11)$

System 4:

- Chords: $A^{\flat}(11)/D$, $E^{\flat}(11)/D$, $C^{\flat}(13)/D$, $D^{\flat}(13)$

Performance Instructions:

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Final Instruction: FINE
fade out on
fire and headlights

this melody. I immediately stopped everything, picked up my manuscript paper, and wrote the entire melody down. I went back later and composed the chords around the melody

"I like how the phrasing is deceiving in this melody—how the sentences are written, so to speak. The periods and commas are in different places from the way it looks rhythmically. For instance, take the quintuplets in bar 11. Normally when people write a quintuplet, they intend for you to hear a five-note phrase. Here, however, you phrase the quintuplets in four. You could perceive the bar as eighth notes with some kind of tempo accelerando. I do that in many compositions.

"The notation I use for this score is not normal guitar notation. If you were to adapt this melody to guitar, you'd perform it a little differently from how it's written. Take the first bar, for example, with its accent and slur. The notation indicates that you pick the first note and pull-off the others. That's *not* the way I performed the guitar parts. I wrote in the slur markings because that's how you identify the phrases.

"The harmonies are actually nothing more than five- or six-note chords, but the way they're structured, they sound very dense. The harmony is stacked with the synth voices on top taking the first four or five notes. The keyboard pad takes the lower chordal parts, anything around middle C or up an octave

"I'm a real sucker for creating a modulating tonal ambience over a pedal tone, which is why I've got this D pedal through the whole thing. When you listen to it without the D pedal, the chords don't sound nearly as lush. I knew I wanted it to be dense. A lot of these clusters set up a tonality you can't get any other way. I was going for an eerie sound. Whenever something sounded too straight-ahead, I tried to twist it. Then again, you can put a straight-ahead chord between two other chords and give it a completely different aura. Sometimes you need a resolution to sound like you're speaking in sentences.

"On this version, I've included chord symbols. They're pretty weird. The chords are ambiguous—they could be called several different things. I gave them names I thought would be most easily understood. When you're doing this kind of reduction, it's a bitch to figure out how to write these things on the staff. For instance, in the third bar I decided to write the whole-notes to the right of the dotted whole-notes. I don't know if that's correct, but modern innovations come out of necessity, and this is as graphic a necessity as you can get!

"When you break this piece down bar by bar, it's very, very melodic. It could have been an hour long and developed into all sorts of weird avenues."

INSIDE THE GODFATHERS



Continued from page 86

(original plans called for naming the group Light Without Heat, not "Vai"), the sessions quickly fired up Steve's admitted control freak impulses. A planned tour promoting the record had to be scrapped after drummer Terry Bozzio and bassist T.M. Stevens

jumped ship, leaving only singer Devin Townsend. Many critics, this writer included, panned the album as overwrought and contrived. The project fizzled.

So what a joy to hear *Alien Love Secrets*. It has the relaxed sense of humor of *Flex-Able*, the drama of *Passion And Warfare*, the intriguing harmonies of *Sex & Religion*, and the brilliant guitar playing he's never failed to deliver. Produced and engineered by Steve (with studio assistance from Sergio Buss, a young recent GP Spotlight winner) and featuring Deen Castronovo on drums, it's a stripped-down, honest affair, with only one big, multi-amped guitar voice guiding you through unearthly sounds, lush to brutal chordal passages, and, of course, terrifying leads.

There's more to come too. Before taking a trip to India in March to "straighten out my karma a bit," Steve is shooting a video of himself and a small combo playing through *Alien Love Secrets*. It's something he's always done to help transcriptionists like Jesse Gress and Dave Whitehill, but this time he's making it available for all the guitarheads out there. He's starting his own record label for "mutated talent," musicians whose unorthodoxy doesn't fit into the accepted niches. He's readying an instructional, interactive CD-ROM that he says will help students to identify their individuality as players as well as teach

"I'M NOT SHREDDING
...MAYBE I AM.
I DON'T KNOW."



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them the building blocks of music. Don't expect the usual from Vai. "It'll be set up like an adventure," he teases. "You won't want to put your guitar down." Later in the year, Steve hopes to have a new full-length album out, half instrumental and half vocal, tentatively titled *Fire Coma*. It's based on a fantasy/morality play, a *Christmas Carol*-like psychic journey through a rock star's thorny subconscious. Heck, sounds like your normal Steve Vai interview.

We're not complaining. Steve's always been willing to articulately plumb the depths of his technical and spiritual pursuits. In this candid interview, he does all that and more, suggesting mind games for improving your ear, examining his mistakes and victories, and tackling the intricacies of his latest opus—stuff you can't get on Mars.



Did you have a different set of expectations for this record than for, say, Sex & Religion?

Guitar players were completely uninterested in *Sex & Religion*. It wasn't geared towards guitar players. So I wanted to offer something that I do fairly well, where I know there's a group of people that appreciate it and look forward to it. I started out with the idea to make a full LP—a real, rich, thick, dense type of record, along the lines of *Passion And Warfare*. I wanted to experiment, to do some singing myself. I don't have a terrible voice, but it's not very rock and roll at all. Plus, guitar fans don't want to hear me sing because A) I'm a guitar player, and B) my voice is mediocre at best. But I'm too eccentric to care about those reasons!

I was going to release the LP and then put an EP out after it for the guitar-playing audience. But I didn't want to sit in the studio for nine months chipping away at a big sculpture right now. I had about 27 tracks, and a handful of them were just these really simple straight-ahead guitar songs. Besides being a guitar player, I'm a big fan of the guitar. I love that damn instrument. So *Alien Love Secrets* was about putting Steve in a room with a guitar and seeing what he comes out with. There are no guitar overdubs on this record except for "Kill The Guy With The Ball," in which I doubled the rhythm guitar.

This stuff on *Alien Love Secrets* is simple. It was a piece of cake. I get an idea and I can hear the whole song and I can see how I'm going to do it on the guitar. And it's really nice to know that it's a guitar speaking to you from the be-

"YOU REALLY NEED TO LISTEN
WITH YOUR MIND'S EAR."



Vai plucks a Taylor at Marilyn Monroe's gravesite.

ginning to the end—it's very personal. It's like those old Van Halen records where you feel like you're sitting in the room with Eddie. Whereas when you get into the big, rich arrangements like *Passion And Warfare*, it's a different kind of feeling. That's something I have always wanted to do. I can do records like this forever.

You make it sound easy

I have to be perfectly honest. I don't just sit and improvise this stuff. I have to work really hard. Sometimes things come out just that easily. But those moments are few. I'm not so gifted that I can just pick up the guitar and everything that comes out is great. I have to work and pick and choose and knit, and on this record I paid a lot of attention to my ears. A lot of those little things that I really like doing are just moments of cool articulation, just little moments of phrasing that probably go over everybody's head. But I work on them until they make me feel a certain way.

Like at one point in "Juice," I'm pushing on the string until it hits the pickup. I wanted it to sound like an oil can. I didn't want any noise before or after it. It's hard to make a squeak and then not have any noise. But that's a special little

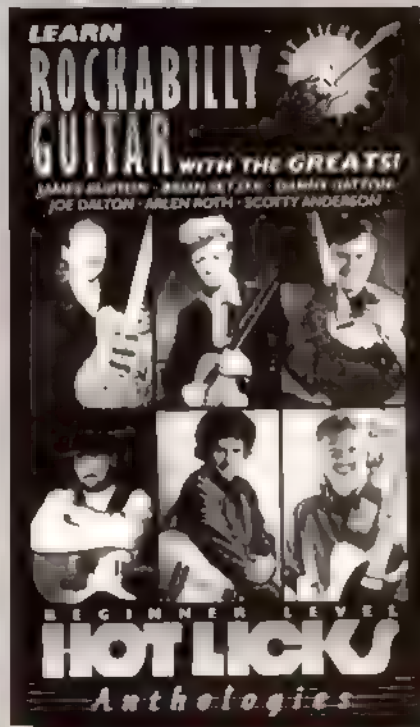
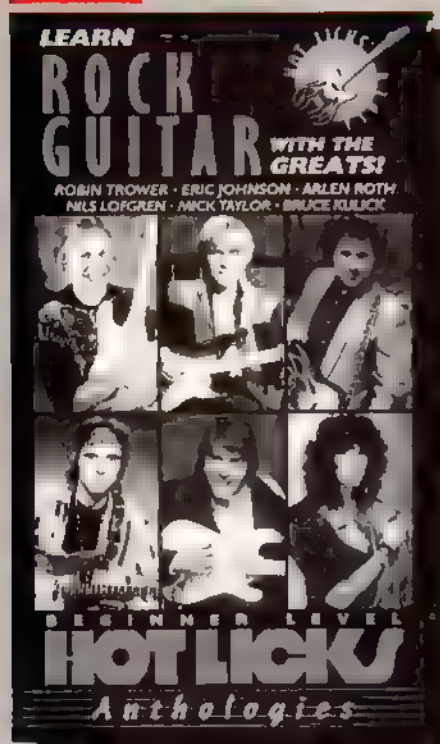
moment for me. There's another break where I drop the G string down with the bar and then it comes up on the A. Well, when you drop a string down with a whammy bar, sometimes it vibrates harder as it goes slack and it makes the note sound different, harder. You've got to hit it at the right spot at the right time. Maybe it's a function of the pickup magnets as the string goes towards it

"Juice" is a fairly standard boogie groove. The phrasing reminds me a bit of Eric Johnson.

I demoed that song six years ago, but I never released it because of that reason. It's too quintessential instrumental guitarist, but I like that song. I knew that I'd probably get criticized, but I also knew that I could do some cool things—I just wanted to do it. I wanted to record and not make any excuses, and there it is. I have to be brutally honest with you. In a sense, I did fashion the song after Eric's thing. I had this song in the can, and I remember hearing "Cliffs Of Dover." I was thinking, "What a great song—it's the kind of boogie I really like." It inspired me to pull this one out of the can and start working on it.

Who is "The Boy From Seattle" about?

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It's about Jimi Hendrix. It's a song that I had kicking around. All these songs just came up from riffs. I've got several thousand song and riff ideas, even orchestral ideas, on stacks of

DATs that I picked from at random, provided the stuff would fit this "guitar album" vein. "The Boy From Seattle" was from Hendrix' "Wait Until Tomorrow." It was very similar to that. It was just that little old riff on tape, but as soon as I heard it years later, I heard the whole song. I'm a big fan of Hendrix, particularly his chordal playing. I can't get away from that. Anyway, I wanted it to sound like a complete piece of music on the guitar. But it sounded so much like Hendrix that, in a sense, it's a tribute to him. When the solo came along, I wanted to do something really clean and bluesy, but then I said, "Okay, enough

of this—where's Vai?" And that's when the second solo comes in.

The solo tone sounds harmonized.

It's one guitar with delays. I'm playing against the delays. I'm using the Roland SDE-3000, because the Eventide H3000 didn't delay long enough. The Roland has a two-and-a-half-second delay. You play a note, and a beat later the left side comes out, and then two beats later, the right side comes out. So you get this stacking effect. You've got to know how to play against something like that or else it sounds like mush. So I had to construct a solo that flowed melod-

VAI-ABLE OPTIONS—A PERVERSION OF FREQUENCIES

"I built this place in '89," says Steve Vai, surveying the technical landscape of his handsome home studio in Hollywood. "The first record I did here was *Passion And Warfare*, and I did the Whitesnake guitars here." Vai still uses the API 40-channel board he had back then, but while making *Sex & Religion* he replaced the console's operating amps with SSL 990 op-amps. "But they sounded really edgy," says Steve, "so we went back to the Jensen transformers, and that's why the new record sounds much warmer."

The album's massive guitar tone was arrived at with the help of a Systematic Sound Limited signal splitter. "The al-

with DiMarzio Evolution pickups. But for "The Boy From Seattle," he knew he needed a Strat: "I probably listened to three dozen Strats, and I chose two. One was a '73. But the one I used for the track was a brand-new Japanese Strat. It kicked ass, and it cost five hundred bucks. I mean, I really wanted to spend a lot of money on a Strat too!" Strings were Dean Markley Blue Steels, .009 through .042, and picks are a translucent lime-green medium. Steve's wife Pia, formerly of gal-glam band Vixen, supplied the heavily stickered Fender P-Bass that Steve played throughout.

In the effects department, *Alien Love Secrets* was mellow compared to *Passion*. Though he used mucho amp gain,

"MY ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO CREATE THE MOST DISTURBING GUITAR SOUND POSSIBLE!"


bum is just one guitar, but any song has four or five different sounds on it," Steve explains. "For years I've tried to split the signal of the guitar, but until now I've never found a box that could do that without destroying or loading down the signal. I've tried everything—this is the one."

Steve's signal was routed to a variety of amps and amp simulators. Out in the sound room he set up a 100-watt Bogner Ecstasy, a Marshall JCM 900, and a Laney GH2100-L on top of three 4x12 cabs loaded with Celestion 30s. For the road he still favors VHT power amps. Steve digs his little Fender Performer for a solid-state vibe, and also keeps a blackface Fender Deluxe on hand. One output of the splitter went to a rackmount SansAmp in conjunction with a Palmer PD1-05 speaker simulator. Sometimes a Zoom stereo effects unit was utilized. Close mikes included Shure SM-57s and Sennheiser 421s, while AKG C-24s and 414s took care of room ambience and reflections.

Generally, Steve went with "Ivo," one of his white Ibanez Jem-777 guitars, or its evil twin, "Pogo." Both are loaded

Steve got his lead boost from an ordinary Boss DS-1 Distortion pedal. More advanced time-domain gear included Lexicon PCM 80s, PCM 70s, PCM 60s, and a 300 for drums, a T.C. Spatial Expander for chorus and flange, and the DigiTech TSR-24 used on "Die To Live" for a "big stereo sound." Steve's live rack still holds a Roland SDE-3000 and a DigiTech DHP-55 Harmony Processor. He used a variety of Urei compressors to rein in those pesky peaks.

The intro sound on "Kill The Guy With The Ball"—what Vai calls the "Venusian vocal"—was created by jiggling the whammy bar, footing a DigiTech whammy pedal (Steve's got a custom rackmount brain for it), and exploiting the Eventide H4000 Ultra Harmonizer with tons of EQ. "My ultimate goal is to create the most disturbing guitar sound possible!" he chuckles. "It's a perversion of frequencies. And believe me, that's a scratch on the surface of what I could do. But I can't make a record of this stuff because people would say, 'What is this shit?' Of course, they say that anyway."



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ically with the delays. I hate to say so, but I like it a lot. I like to listen to it.

What are those vaguely Indian-sounding hiccups right before the last chord?

You pull the B-string off the neck and it goes "wheeahh, wheeahh." [See the Oct. '84 issue to learn this lick as played in "The Attitude Song."] I've done it a lot, but this is the first time I have ever used it so melodically. It's also partly from a technique I learned from L. Shankar, the Indian violinist, where you play a note and then do these fast slides up roughly a quarter-step. It's very reminiscent of Indian music. But I originally learned that pulling technique when I was 14 years old. I was in a guitar lesson with Joe Satriani, and he turned around, pulled the guitar up to his lips, and pulled the string around the neck. I was like, "How did you do that?" He didn't want me to see. He was tricking me into thinking that he did something with his teeth or his lips. I quizzed him, and he wouldn't show me. I don't know if he ever showed me or if I just figured it out later on, but it was funny.

What harmonic materials were you working with?

It's all Mixolydian. The chord changes stay relatively diatonic, and then it will shift to a very unneighboring chord to give it a different sound. But if you play the right chord in between all the diatonic stuff, it really adds a nice flavor. My favorite part of that song was right before the solo. I really liked the way the bass note changes and sets up a completely different mood.

I was telling you about cool moments in songs I like. Well, before the solo there's a little chordal riff and the phrasing is very special for me. I like hearing it. There's nothing fast or technically impressive about it, but it's one of those nice moments.

Tell me about "Bad Horsie." Is that a dropped-B tuning?

It's a D tuning with the D string tuned down another whole-step to C. You might be thinking of "Ya-Yo Gakk." That's a 7-string guitar with B on the bottom. "Bad Horsie" was inspired from the Jack Butler *Crossroads* thing. I created a story for the song. It was part of a weird dream where this Indian brave was riding through the wilderness on a horse, and these people were laying tracks for the train while the train was chasing them. Actually, I was on the horse. Wherever we went in the high grass, the train followed and was going to hit us, because you don't know where the tracks are because you can't see them

"TRY TO SEPARATE YOURSELF FROM WHAT YOUR



in the grass. So we got really upset about this, and turned the tables around and started going after this train. My horse turned into a steel stallion that was huffing and puffing. I was playing the guitar, and all the sounds that were coming out were these train sounds. When you listen to the song, you can picture this iron horse that is like a locomotive with me standing on the back of it playing guitar and chasing this train. That's where the song came from.

"Ya-Yo Gakk" proves that nobody has equaled you in the art of making the guitar sound like a vocal.

It takes a certain absurdity to want to do it in the first place. It's always seemed natural to try to emulate different sounds, and vocal sounds especially. The voice is a series of pitches that move around. When I was working with Frank, I was transcribing his vocal lines and copying them on the guitar. It's an interesting way to construct a melody. "Ya-Yo Gakk" sounds like a real straight-ahead pop song. But, first of all, it took about a year and a half of recording my son Julian singing this little song he used to sing, "Ya-Yo Gakk." I've got hours of "Ya-Yo Gakk." I'm the proud father, always with the camera or the tape recorder. The first time I ever heard him utter those words, I heard the whole

track in my head. So when it came time to do it, I went into the vault, got the DATs, and put all these "Ya-Yo Gakk"s on the computer and started cutting them up. It took five 15-hour days just to cut the vocal track, because I had to find all the right "Ya-Yo Gakk"s in the right key. And then I had to make it sound like they were all building up, verse by verse by verse, and I had to have them all work in the beat. That's in the key of B, using the 7-string guitar.

I try to get every little nuance of Julian's voice, his squeaks and everything. Those quarter-tones are what makes it speak. That's what makes it sound like a voice—all those odd quarter-tones and even in-between quarter-tones. So you have to eliminate the idea of pitch, fret, pitch, fret, and just totally bend with the voice. And for all those little hiccups and squeaks, you just have to stretch.

With all of these songs, I didn't want to just make a drum beat and a bass pattern and a guitar melody that goes on top. I wanted to create a rhythm/melody where you don't lose the sense of the track when the guitar plays a melody. Henceforth, you've got "Bad Horsie" with a call-and-response: "Gong. Gong. Waaa, da-da-da-daaaaa. Gong. Gong." Everything is based around rhythm complementing melody. In



"Juice" it's the same thing; "Die To Live" is the same thing. "The Boy From Seattle" is all chords. When the melody comes in—which is the solo—I drop everything out as an effect to counterbalance everything grinding. You lose everything underneath.

What about "Kill The Guy With The Ball"?

I have no excuses for that tune. [Laughs.] I didn't want to have blazing riffs. There are certain chording techniques I do with my wrist that I haven't really brought out as much in the past. It's a snapping of the wrist, an ability to play odd time signatures very fast. It's a combination of fast downstrokes with full upstrokes. But "Kill The Guy" is basically controlled chaos. I try to set up different tonal structures by keeping the E as the home plate and creating different melodies on top. There are times where there's *Fmaj* going on top of E, which creates a very

awkward tension. Rhythmically there's a lot going on too—a lot of odd times. There's also some really weird techniques where I play low notes in upper-structure triads. All these upper-structure triads are voiced 5th-root-3rd, with the bass notes moving in counter motion to it. There's a lot of counter-melody going on, but it's contrapuntal in the chord direction and the bass notes. It starts out with a triad and a bass note right next to each other, and they separate chromatically. I wrote that main riff in college, and I just incorporated it in the song. I'm glad you appreciate it, because I thought that it would go over everybody's head. There's a lot going on. It's a very deep song—it really beats me up.

The second part of "Kill The Guy With The Ball" is called "The God Eaters." There's some very dense chords going on there with this otherworldly melody on top. It will probably be skipped over by the guitar-playing audience, because it's not something that you would put into a guitar magazine. [Editor's note: But we did. Check out Steve's hand-drafted manuscript and lesson on page 87.] It's not your typical cool riff. It's all harmony. It's built around lush harmonies and the way that the melody voice leads to the next section and the chord follows. It's real interesting.



"I'M A CONTROL FREAK,
AND I COULDN'T STAND NOT
HAVING THINGS A CERTAIN WAY."
—STEVE ON SEX & RELIGION

"Tender Surrender" has a bit of Carlos Santana's spirit in it.

When I was about 15 I walked into a store and they were playing "Europa." I bought that record immediately, listened to that song chronically, and learned every single nuance. That's when I discovered—even before Hendrix and Beck—that the guitar can play a song from beginning to end, where it's totally out in front and pure melody. That's what that song is—pure, unadulterated melody in its most effective form. Then I started getting into Beck, and then I heard stuff like "Because We've Ended As Lovers." That was another verification. I remember listening to the solo Roy Buchanan did on his version of "If 6 Was 9." He's playing a Telecaster, and he's stretching this note and getting really, really sloppy, and all of a sudden, he just lets loose with this wail. Wow! He used being sloppy as an effect. I do that on "Tender Surrender." I'm playing really fast at the end there, and I start stretching this note. I use everything in my power to get that note to just scream "sloppy." It's hard to do, but it's so effective. And then, pow—right into a really fluid line.

One of my best moments of any record is three bars in "Tender Surrender," where it just builds. I consciously tried to build that song slowly and then give it up and bring it back, give it up and bring it back. Letting it go emotionally and melodically at just the right moment is such a treat. I don't know if it will ever affect anybody the way it does me.

I put it at the end of the record because I wanted it to be the seventh song. On all my records the seventh song is the guitar ballad. If you notice on *Flex-Able* it's "Sleep," on *Passion And Warfare* it's "For The Love Of God," and on *Sex & Religion* it's "Touching Tongues." On *Alien Love Secrets* it's "Tender Surrender."

What is the most technically challenging thing you do?

Getting the intonation in high notes to be perfect. That's hard. Like in "Die To Live" it's not the sliding that's hard, it's the intonation. When you slide a note, you're putting pressure on the string, stretching the string and creating slack. So if you start on the 3rd fret and slide up to the 15th fret, you're putting pressure on that string to get shorter but also to get slacker. So the slacker it is, the lower the note. The intonation when you finally get to that 15th fret is going to be flat. That's why, especially when you slide a note and then bend it, it's hard to keep that intonation. Yngwie's intonation is stunning. He can slide all over the place and get the note right. And if he's vibrating a G, there's an A in there someplace. It's so wide.

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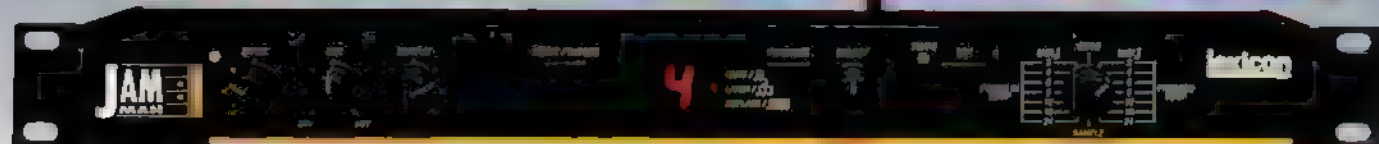
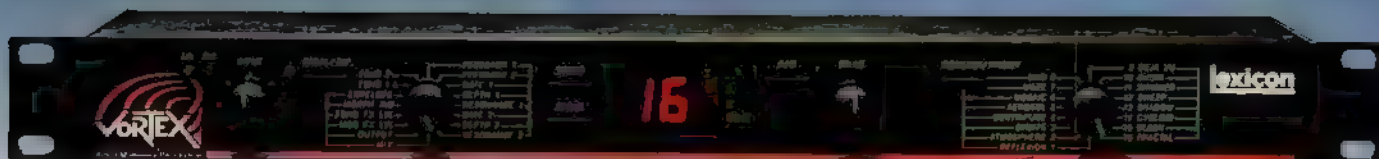
mind has an ear too. It's a kind of listening, but it's not using your ears to listen. It's listening with your inner ear, and that's what you want to translate onto the guitar. It could become a very mechanical process to play through scales and go through the grids. But to really stop and listen before you play is where those inspired moments come from. Being able to catch a thread and go with it from your ear to your fingers is a discipline in listening. It's so tempting to pick up the instrument and play, and sometimes that's great. But where do melodies come from? They can't just come from grids and scales. They have to come from your mind's ear.

Let's say you're soloing. Stop what you're playing and listen in your head. Just listen to the track and imagine a melody. Forget about your fingers and the scales—forget about everything. Picture a melody in your mind's ear and then go about trying to execute it. Chances are you will have something a lot different than if you just went through the grids. Another thing to try—and this is really hard, but when you can do it, it's like a complete liberation—is to play your instrument and try to listen to the amp. It sounds pretty simple, but if you're playing, you're normally not listening to what's coming out. You're creating it as you go. But try to separate yourself from what your fingers are doing and listen to the amp. You can start steering it. You can start telling it where to go. It's an exercise in using your mind's ear. It causes you to pull out things that your fingers aren't going to do.

I am completely guilty of sitting for years and meandering on the guitar neck. Once you start getting chops, it's fascinating to watch your fingers move. "Wow! This is cool." That was my video game when I was a kid. That gets tiring because it's just a short phase for your mind. Your mind has to aspire to greater things than that. Your mind will gravitate towards those things that you desire, and it will take snapshots of everything that it knows, and fabricate its own thing.

What is the importance of discipline to a musician?

It takes a lot of discipline to be very proficient on your instrument. When you inflict discipline on yourself, you have to really exercise your willpower. It's like an alcoholic. An alcoholic or a drug addict has a problem. It seems like you can't beat it on your own. In order to save yourself, you have to reach down really deep within and pull out stuff you never knew you had, strength that you never bothered to find before.



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When I really got into practicing, I wouldn't stop. I would force myself to keep going. That walks hand in hand with spirituality, because you're reaching in very deep, and there are many who believe that that's where all your spirituality comes from. There's a little spark of truth within everybody, a total endless diamond of truth. Imagine a dump truck filled with sand. There's a priceless diamond in the middle of it. All those little grains of sand are excuses or weird hangups or deep psychological traumas that may have taken place thousands of years ago in a past life. In order to reach down to find the truth, you have to dig through these things.

One of my complaints about Sex & Religion was that it didn't sound like a band.

Sex & Religion was an attempt to create a band. I've always wanted to be in a band. But that was an abysmal disaster. It wasn't a band, and that was my mistake. A band is a group of people that gets together and contributes unconditionally. It's like a marriage. That's what

I did in high school. That was the only band I was ever in. All the other situations I got involved in were fun, and they were, in a sense, bands, but as far as sounding and being like a band goes, that wasn't present on *Sex & Religion*. Having a band just isn't in the stars right now.

Was it your goal to control every facet of the project?

No. But I have this problem. I'm a control freak, and I couldn't stand not having things a certain way. In a way, I ruined the idea of everybody else's unconditional contribution. But that's something I discovered about myself—I wasn't ready for it. Maybe that's why it sounds a little convoluted. But I couldn't have it any other way. I'm sorry. I sound like I'm apologizing for it, but I like that record just the way it is. I only wish I would have changed the stereo buss and the console!

Your liner notes state, "The modern day virtuoso refuses to die."

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ment. I'm not saying that proficiency walks hand in hand with inspiration, because you can be very inefficient and very untechnical and still be a very inspired writer or player.

But kids want to be able to progress and express themselves and play their instrument efficiently, and that's where a record like *Alien Love Secrets* is geared. I mean, I'm not shredding... maybe I am. I don't know. After I listened to "Die To Live," I just wept, man. I said to myself, "I can't do anything more touching than that." That's the best I can do. And nobody will hear that song like I hear it. There's not one bit of shred on that whole song. There's no fast playing. But I need to balance what I am doing with little shreds because I like to express myself through speed playing sometimes.

Will you get better on guitar?

Yes. I could be much better than I am. I know the secrets of being a really great guitar player, but it seems like I don't have the time to bring them to life. It takes 95% absolute at-

tention—you can't give it 100% attention. I'm trying to be realistic here. There was a time in my life when the guitar was everything. Music is still everything, but I have my family and other things. I'd love it if I could sit with a guitar and go undisturbed for six months or a year and just really get into the instrument again. I'm very happy with *Alien Love Secrets*. But it's just a brushing of what I think I could really achieve musically—what I will hopefully achieve eventually. To date, it's some of the best stuff I've got. I don't know if that makes sense, I feel like I know how to be great, but it only comes in little pieces.

I want to dig deeper. I want to become even more intimate with the instrument. I want to really get into the vibrations more. I want to live in every little strength. It might sound weird, but when you're really that close to the instrument, it's like the military of guitar—with guys like me it never was a choice. It never was a decision. It was just what it is, you know? And there are so many other things going on in my life and career, doing a tour and the interviews and everything, that it's really hard sometimes to just really get back to the guitar.

To be a guitar monk.

To be a guitar monk. Very good. I do that now and then and I will again. As long as I can do that, you can rest assured that I'll be delivering the goods.

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BACK to the future

GEAR CZARS REFINE, PERFECT AND PROVOKE IN '95

N AMM '95 proved every bit the mind-altering equipment lovefest we anticipated, as hundreds of wily manufacturers took up positions in freshly bankrupt Anaheim, California. They baited their traps—er, booths—with splashy displays, homebrewed beer, scantily clad females, etc., and waited for the flies to land. Buzzing this honey pot of geardom were music dealers, journalists, musicians, and assorted riffraff, here to fill shops, publications, and tour buses

BY ART THOMPSON & MIKE BAKER

ILLUSTRATION: ROBERT BURGER

Back to the Future

with the latest gizmos. For four days we swarmed through the Center's four stadium-size floors, strummed and twiddled hundreds of new guitars, amps, and related widgets, clapped politely at presentations, and tried to avoid getting mowed down by important-looking rock people.

We could have spent our off time hanging around the Marriott's magic piano singing drunken renditions of "You've Got A Friend," but nooo. We convened a guitar builders' symposium hosted by none other than ex-GPhoncho Tom Wheeler, sampled from a wide variety of flu viruses timed to kick in once the festivities were over, and grooved on the wild getups worn by many attendees.

Seymour Duncan's Seth Lover model replicates the humbucker Lover designed for Gibson in 1955.



The skunk man seen near the Korg and Yamaha booths deserved a prize—perhaps a mirror. Here's our report.

ACOUSTICS

Manufacturers haven't exactly fallen over themselves reissuing broomstick-and-cigar-box field twangers, but by carefully blending old looks and 21st-century produc-

tion techniques, the latest boxes deliver incredible vibe and performance at just about every price point. Like the song says, "Anything you want, you got it." Tops of hand-carved spruce or bulletproof graphite, backs and sides of stratospherically expensive Brazilian rosewood or low-cost nato, simple bridge piezos or sophisticated mike/pickup systems, cosmetics suitable for Mother Teresa or Tammy Faye. While you can certainly spend as much as it takes to achieve your particular acoustic climax, this new crop of axes is also pretty doggone affordable. If you've been holding off because every guitar that pushed your buttons cost more than a week-end in Tokyo, look again.

Alvarez' very retro 5055 Bluesman (\$500) has f-holes and is designed for a round, mellow response. It comes to ya dolled up with shell inlays, a rosewood bridge and fingerboard, double-reinforced neck, and oodles of binding. Alvarez Yairi's WY1BK (\$1,500), co-designed by the Grateful Dead's Bob Weir, features a compact cutaway body, cedar top, direct-coupled bridge, System 500 pickup and EQ, and hand-inlaid Mexican abalone around the binding and soundhole.

Despite its name, Dana Bourgeois' Slope Shoulder Dreadnought (\$2,170)

stands straight and is voiced for warmth and roundness. Features include a bearclaw Sitka-spruce top, mahogany back and sides, and rosewood fingerboard and bridge. Pastry-porkin' pickers will dig the Slope's available "apple fritter" pine top and "raised glazed" back and sides.

Never a company to lean too heavily on the past, Carvin's AE185 Tele-shaped acoustic-electric (\$799) has f-holes, a saddle pickup and humbuckers, mahogany neck-through-body construction, spruce top, and acoustic and electric outputs with a blend control.

Gretsch's 17" Synchronomatic Limited Edition (\$4,000) is a sunburst beauty with a carved spruce top, maple back, sides, and neck, gold "stair-step" tuners, and a gold floating pickup. Maple finish is available for an extra 300 bones.

If you're hankering for some celebrity mojo and money's no object, Martin's Eric Clapton 000-42EC signature model ought to fill the bill. For a cool \$8,100 (\$8,320 w/sunburst top), you get a Style 45 pearl-inlaid headplate, ivoroid bindings, and E.C.'s elegant signature, all slapped on a 000-size body with a 24.9" scale length. Only 461 ECs will be made, so if a fab-looking flat-top that you'll probably have to guard with your life is in your future, hop to it.

Ovation's 1995 Collector's Edition (\$1,899) with the new OptiMax miking system features a piezo bridge pickup plus a tiny microphone mounted inside the



The Tone King Continental is a monda dose of '50s living-room chic.

Sovtek's
Russki-made
Muff is a mil-
spec reissue
of Electro-
Harmonix'
classic fuzz.



body. A blend control lets you mix the mike and piezo signals, while a special output takes the mike out of the monitor to combat feedback. The '95 has a mid-depth cutaway body, Sitka-spruce top, and an attractive rosette of walnut, maple, and abalone.

Building on last year's baby steps into the acoustic field, Peavey trotted out the CJ-33P (\$1,050), a jumbo-sized strummer, and CC-37P (\$1,100), which sports a unique cutaway body shape. Available in 12-string versions, these Landola-made guitars feature spruce tops and rosewood sides, backs, and fingerboards.

Santa Cruz' 000 12 Fret (\$3,275) is a sub-dreadnought gem that says adios to boomy bass for a sweeter, more even sound. The 000's ebony fingerboard sports 12 frets clear of the body, and its Indian rosewood body and sides are beautifully bound in ivoroid and topped with a Sitka-spruce soundboard.

Ovation's Pacific-rim pen pal Takamine added to their Santa Fe line with the PSF-95 (\$1,749), a limited-edition acoustic-electric with a small "New Yorker"-style body and cool abalone sun fingerboard inlays. The PSF is available without electronics for \$254 less. Like the other hairy-legged members of Tak's popular "Natural" series, the NP-17C acoustic-electric (\$1,549) features a satin-finished koa body, sparse cosmetics, and no pickguard. The dreadnought cutaway's

soundhole is ringed by a tasteful rosette of padauk, maple, and ebony, however.

Taylor's luxuriously appointed booth was the appropriate setting for their Limited Edition Grand Auditorium series (\$2,498 to \$7,000). These classy axes feature spruce or cedar tops, mahogany, rosewood, walnut, or curly koa backs and sides, and varying degrees of fancy inlays. Only 50 specimens of the GABE model—the line's \$7,000 big kahuna—will be made, but all will be hand-signed and numbered by Bob Taylor.

Washburn introduced a trio of promising newcomers: the D27S Southern Jumbo (\$600), the D42SW Harvest (\$800), and the D44SW Golden Harvest (\$870). All have spruce tops, Grover tuners, and variations on the pearl-inlaid-peghead theme. The D42 features solid mahogany back and sides, the D44 solid Indian rosewood, and the D27 figured koa.

Yamaha's new FG411SCE (\$659) is designed to look great onstage in either of its two suits, natural or tobacco sunburst. This zippy ax sports a cutaway, spruce top, and piezo pickup with 3-band EQ. It's not signed or numbered by anyone, but if you send us yours along with a case of Schlitz, we'll be happy to do the honors.

ELECTRICS

Guitar companies realize that today's consumer is better in-

formed and has more choices than ever. If an ax doesn't look, feel, and sound like it's worth the sticker price, someone else's surely will. For the most part, builders continue to hone and refine the basic principles scribed onto papyrus by the gods of guitar craft, Leo Fender and Ted McCarty. The result is one of the most erectilious lineups of fine-looking, superb-playing, and often even incredible-sounding solids we've seen under one tent. Calling to your dollars like the queen of the Sirens are a plethora of cool instruments designed to deliver exceptional booty factor no matter when your wallet cries uncle.

Our nominee for the "Miss Strange-But-Cool" award is the brainchild of Olivier Betticare Créations. This guitar lets you switch pickups without resoldering or even loosening the strings. And that's not just some cheesy pickup made by a prophead with bad hair,



Not about to eat vintage crow, DOD revived their Overdrive Preamp 250 pedal.

either. Thanks to a special mounting bracket, you can snap in a Duncan, DiMarzio, Barden, or any other pickup you choose.

ESP will soon have in place a unique computer-based guitar ordering system to assist customers in designing their dream ax. Starting with a basic guitar template on a computer screen, you'll be able

The \$6,000
PRS Carlos
Santana is a
righteous copy
of Santana's
number-one ax.



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to scroll through options such as colors, body styles, and headstock shapes and instantly see whether you've created a masterpiece or a piece of junk. When you're satisfied, you can even print out a picture to take home and show your friends while your guitar is being built.

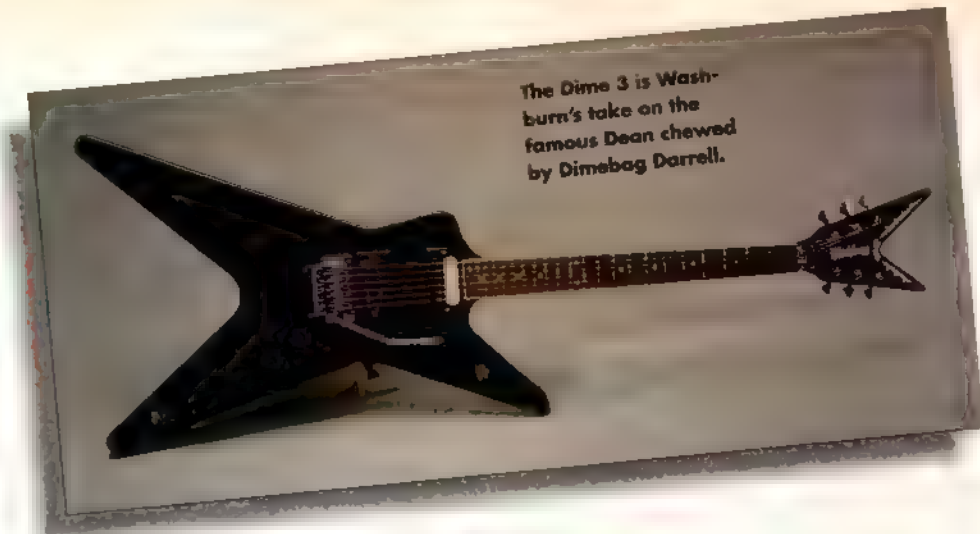
Bonnie Raitt and Fender presented the Bonnie Raitt Signature Stratocaster (\$1,500). Though based on Raitt's famous brown Strat, the replica has a narrower neck and three Texas Special pickups and does not come with unfinished wood. The Stratsters have also teamed up with Roland to create the "GR" Ready Strat (\$1,280), an American Standard with a built-in synth pickup and electronics designed to make guitar synthesis a "plug and play" as opposed to a "read manuals and weep" proposition. Country freaks may want to investigate the Clarence White Telecaster (\$3,800). It comes with a Parsons-White B-bender and Scruggs-style tuners on both E strings. Funky stickers and ridiculous chops are extra.

Strolling bleary-eyed around the show floor, we were almost run down by a cherry 1960 Corvette squealing towards the spot where Gibson had pitched their tent. Wondering what kind of com-

mercial tie-in could be worth human life, we rounded a corner, shoved a couple of gawkers aside, and beheld the Corvette 200 Series Guitar (\$4,750). This deluxe creature comes in colors straight out of the 1960 Chevy catalog—Roman Red, Sateen Silver, etc.—and looks like the offspring of a Les Paul and the passenger-side door of a classic 'Vette. Only 200 Corvettes will be sold, and each comes with a print by a famous automobile artist. Gibson plans to release guitars based on Corvettes of other vintages as well. If \$4,750 seems a little steep, consider Gibson's Les Paul Bantam Elite, which retails for a sensible \$4,550. This guitar is essentially a Les Paul with sound chambers to enhance the tone and reduce the weight—bad news for chiropractors.

Also loitering in the vintage zone was Gretsch, who introduced the new Sparkle Jet Series (\$1,750). These guitars are essentially Duo-Jets with eye-popping glitter finishes—any of which

The Dime 3 is Washburn's take on the famous Dean chewed by Dimebag Darrell.



Stompboxes du jour: Digital Music Corp.'s Tremolo, Boastone, Overdrive, and Proctavia.

would look pretty keen with a matching lamé suit and some hefty muttonchops.

Hamer had a bit of a problem when their new Eclipse caused the lights to go out. This little mahogany monster comes in 6- and 12-string versions (\$999 and \$1,299, respectively) and sports two Duncan Mini Humbuckers. The company is also reissuing their Standard Custom (\$1,799), an Explorer-shaped ax with a solid mahogany

body (is there an echo here?), figured maple top, and ivoroid binding. Only a few will be made this year, so keep your eyes peeled.

Ibanez' Paul Gilbert PGM30 Signature model (\$750) comes out of the box with a reverse headstock, basswood body, double-locking Lo-TRS II trem, and even Gilbert's painted-on f-holes. What, no drill?

Jerry Jones' lavish spread of Danelectro knockoffs included the cool-sounding Baritone (\$795) and the Electric Sitar (\$1,195). With 13 sympathetic strings and authentic gator finish, the Sitar is just the thing for those who like to burn a little, uh, incense while practicing.

Brian Moore was back with the classy MC-1 (\$2,599), a righteous double-cutaway available in a variety of colors, finishes, fretboard materials, and pickup configurations. These inexplicably overlooked axes have cleverly placed output jacks and underside truss-rod access. Cool.

Dunlop's Uni-Vibe poses with optional Speed Controller pedal. The TS-1 (L) is a stereo tremolo unit while the TVP-1 offers tremolo and volume control.



This year's winner of the coveted "Strangest Press Release" trophy goes to Phantom Guitar Works, who bring up the deceased Brian Jones to plug their Teardrop model (\$995), yet identify the Phantom guitar (\$995) as a "redesigned replica of an abandoned body shape." Hmm. Hillbillies take note: Phantom's Mandoguitar (\$995) reportedly sounds like a cross between an electric mandolin and a 12-string guitar capoed at the 12th fret.

At the PRS fort, the big news was the dynamic duo of the Carlos Santana and 10th Anniversary guitars (\$6,000 and \$6,600, respectively). The limited-edition Carlos is a reproduction of the original PRS that Santana has been gettin' down on for years. It features a mahogany body and maple top, "Carlos" pickups, and is available in any color as long as it's yellow. Only a hundred 10th Anniversary axes will be made, and that means more ebony fretboards, mother-of-pearl inlays, abalone purfling, and gold McCarty pickups for the rest of the PRS line.

Guitar acquisition syndrome is a runaway malady in the guitar community, but we're happy to report there is a cure. The Roberts Roto-Neck (\$500-\$600) is an electric solidbody with as many as four fretboards grafted onto one rotating neck. Each board has its own set of strings and tuners, allowing the same guitar to accommodate several different tunings (or strung sets) without requiring the player to schlep around one of those multi-necked abominations.

Veilleite Guitars' MK I Bantone (\$2,250) looks like Bo Diddley dropped by the shop to sketch out

its body design. This cool-sounding growler features a 27^{3/4}" scale length, and boasts dual EMG single-coils plus a Mike Christian piezo bridge pickup. According to the manufacturer, the MKI can be used like a viola or cello, but we're pretty sure that would scare the daylight out of the rest of the string section.

Yamaha's return-to-roots trend offers twin Tele takeoffs: the 102S (\$319) and the 302S (\$449). These slick-playing, single-cutaway axes have alder bodies, maple necks, and stick to the gospel of Leo in their choice of pickups and control configurations. The fancier 302 has a pearloid pickguard, nice binding, and gold hardware for extra snazz.

The Hollow Classic (\$2,340) is the latest Strat-style ax from Tom

Anderson Guitarworks. As its name suggests, the Hollow has specially designed sound chambers for a livelier, more resonant sound. Top-notch workmanship, woods, and hardware add up to a lightweight, fast-playing ax that zips the Strat thing into an entirely new zone.

Washburn's Wing Series includes the Eagle (\$1,999), Raven (\$429), and Hawk (\$799). Featuring double cutaways, dual humbuckers, and Grover tuners, these axes exude a heavy Paul Junior vibe. Finishes and electronics become more bodacious as you

move upward from bird to bird. Washburn also has a couple of new signature guitars. The N8 (\$3,999), a doubleneck addition to their popular Nuno Bettencourt series, features a 12-string top neck and a lower sixer with a Stephen's Extended Cutaway neck joint. The Dime 3 (\$1,999), a rockin' replica of Dimebag's famous Dean, has a few refinements like a Floyd Rose bridge, Duncan and Lawrence pickups, and a nifty "Dime Slime" finish that looks a bit like the underside of a snail.

AMPLIFIERS

Tube designs continue to dominate the scene as both new and old companies lugged out fresh new flavors based on old family recipes. But there was also renewed vigor in the silicon sectors. Peavey's new TransTubes promise accurate tube response with the lower cost and increased reliability of solid-state. Bless their Southern hearts, but have we seen this movie before? Another potentially interesting development was Vudu Audio Products' plug-in replacements for 12AX7 and 12AT7 preamp tubes. Vudu's CEO/mad scientist Kirkwood Ruff wore funny ties, held seminars, displayed transconductance curves—not to be confused with the curves displayed at some booths—and did his level best to convince everyone that his cool-running metal cans will soon make



Crate's Blue Voodoo head packs 120 watts of tube crunch.



Marching to a store near you are Gibson's Russian-made Red Bear 60- and 120-watt tube amps.



The Fishman Powerbridge adds piezo saddle pickups to a Strat-style tremolo or Tele-style bridge.

Back to the Future

vacuum tubes about as popular as John Wayne Bobbitt at a battered-women's shelter. Samples should be in our hands as you read this—Vudu's, that is.

Though the majority of amp manufacturers embraced the "less is more" ethos, the kitchen-sink approach is by no means dead. Despite all the retro hullabaloo, there are more channel-switching, feature-laden amps now than ever before—especially in tweed and blonde. But if simplicity is more your thing, you'll be happy to learn that one channel, point-to-point wiring, and a couple of knobs ain't necessarily a \$2,000-plus proposition. A number of manufacturers introduced models with these accouterments for about what you'd pay for a nice television. Amp or TV? Hmm, tough choice what with O.J. and all.

ADA's TriTube 75M (\$1,895) and Quad Tube 150M (\$2,295) MIDI amps are hybrid designs with tube preamps and solid-state power sections. They feature built-in compression, analog chorus, noise reduction, graphic EQ, and reconfigurable bass, mid, treble, and presence controls. Differing mainly in power and speaker configurations—the 75M pumps 75 watts into a single 12" Celestion speaker, while the stereo 150M wallops each of its two 12s with 75 watts—the TriTubes offer 128 memory locations (37 of which are factory presets) and a VariCab function that enables you to emulate the response of different speakers and cabinets. An included 4x4 footswitch selects four banks of four "channels," while the optional MIDI Pedal Pack (\$299) lets you instantly access all 128 slots and even make real-time parameter changes on the fly.

Vintage psychos will applaud Ampeg's decision to reissue the Jet (\$425), an all-tube, 15-watt, 1x12 combo that comes in reverb and reverb/tremolo flavors, and the Reverberocket (price TBA), a 40-watt 1x12 with footswitchable lead and clean channels, reverb, tremolo,



The Bandit 112 is one of Peavey's new TransTube solid-state combos.

and line-in/out jacks. Both amps have ultra-cool diamond-pattern Tolex covering, stove-top knobs, chrome chassis, and leather "dog-bone" handles.

Bedrock's Emperor series 28-watt combos look like '40s-era travel suitcases, but these 6V6-powered single-channel designs offer handwired circuitry and vintage-style controls for surprisingly low bucks. The Emperor Custom (\$1,145) has two 10" speakers, volume (with pull boost), bass, midrange, and treble controls, and comes in a variety of two-tone "seal skin" vinyl coverings. The Emperor Special (\$1,045) has identical features with a black vinyl cabinet. The two-tone Emperor Deluxe (\$1,095) has one 12" speaker, and the Emperor Standard (\$995) is the same amp in black.

Budda Amplification's Twin-master Ten (\$800 head, \$900 combo) melds tonal elements of vintage Fender Deluxes and Vox AC30s with the gain structure of a Plexi Marshall. The 20-watt Budda features dual EL84 output tubes, point-to-point wiring, one 12" or two 10" speakers, and the bitchinest-looking knobs around. Rackmount Buddas are also available.

Carvin's never been one to let cool trends go unnoticed. Their Vintage Tube series includes the Vintage 33 (\$429), an EL84-powered, 33-watt 1x12 combo; the 112 Nomad (\$569), a 50-watt 1x12 combo with four EL84s; and the

212 Bel Air (\$639), essentially a 2x12 Nomad. All feature dual channels with separate gain and tone controls, tube-driven spring reverb, effects loop (except the Vintage 33), and cabinet-voiced line outs. The VT50 Vintage (\$519) is an EL84-powered 50-watt head that's designed to be mated with the 410 Speaker System (\$279), an open-back 4x10 with Carvin VL10 65-watt speakers.

Crate's Blue Voodoo series amps and speaker cabinets offer classy blue-and-gold cosmetics and rugged 15-ply birch cabinets. The BV60 (\$750), a 6L6-powered, 60-watt 1x12 combo, packs three channels, reverb, XLR line out, and auto bias for quick swapping of EL34, 5881, 6550, and 6L6 tubes. The BV6212 (\$850) is a 2x12 version of the BV60 with American Vintage speakers, and the BV60H (\$800) is a 60-watt head with dual reverbs. Crate's BV120H (\$950) is a 120-watt head with dual reverbs, XLR line out, and auto bias. The color-coordinated 4x12 cabs include the BV412R (\$650), a straight-front 120-watt mono/stereo unit, and the angled-front BV412S (\$650).

Egnater Amplification's Dual Tone 100 (\$1,550 head; \$1,850 4x10 combo) is a two-channel vintage-voiced amp designed to deliver a wide range of Brit and American tube tones. The 100-watt Dual uses four 5881 power tubes and features a DC filament supply, a toroidal



Only 50
Taylor
GABEs will
be made.
Price?
\$7,000
a copy.

power transformer, and a unique four-position rotary switch that lets you pump 10 to 100 watts into 4 Ω , 8 Ω , and 16 Ω loads.

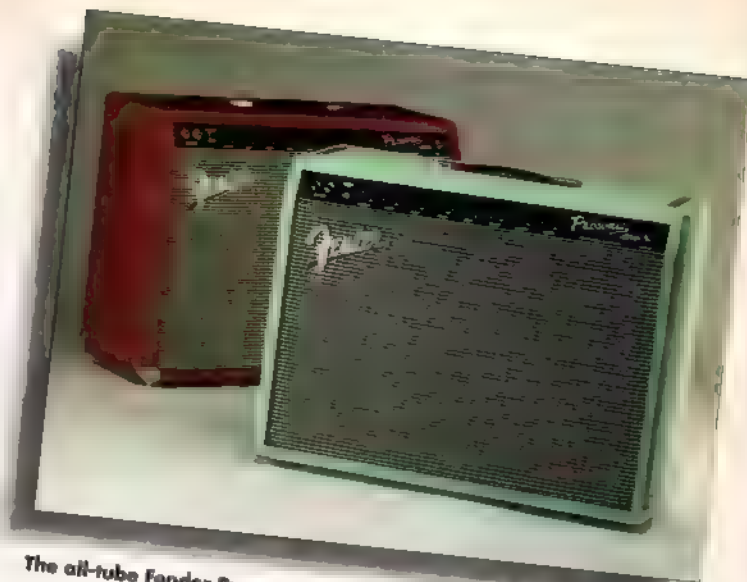
Fatboy Amplifier's Chubby (\$1,495 head; \$1,695 combo), a handbuilt 80-watter, offers two fully independent channels, tube-driven effects loop, variable direct-recording out, and a birch-ply cabinet. The combo version is equipped with a Celestion or a THD 12" speaker. The Twin F3C (\$2,495) is a three-channel 80-watt combo with a variable direct-recording out and a pair of Celestion or THD 12" speakers mounted diagonally for greater sound dispersion.

Fender's Prosonic (price TBA) was quickly dubbed "Fender's Boogie" by some attendees. This 60-watt two-channel combo features dual cascading gain controls in the drive channel and a 3-way rectifier switch that lets you operate the amp in class A or class AB with a tube rectifier, or class AB with a solid-state rectifier. The Prosonic packs two 10" Celestions and tube-driven reverb, and comes in zesty colors like red lizard and sea foam lizard. The Vibrolux (\$1,200), an ultra-happening 40-watt 2x10 combo, delivers supremely fat distortion tones thanks to its unique channel-combining mixing stage

and zero-negative feedback circuit. It features tube reverb and vibrato, chrome tilt-back legs, and comes in tasty blond Tolex with tan grillcloth and ivory radio knobs. The steel-ready Vibrasonic (\$1,500) pumps 100 watts of tube power into a single 15" speaker and features normal and steel-guitar channels, reverb, and vibrato. Baritone twangers take note.

Gibson's Red Bear MK 60 and MK 120 (\$599/\$699) Russian-built 60- and 120-watt tube heads offer 5881 power, preamp and master-volume controls, an input-sensitivity switch, and treble, bass, middle, and presence knobs. The Slant Bear and Straight Bear 4x12 speaker cabs (\$699 each) feature recessed handles and Celestion G-12L 35-watt speakers. Rock onsk!

Guitarists who love to whip, beat, and otherwise dominate their tones will dig Groove Tubes' Soul-o Slave 75 (\$1,195) and Soul-o Slave 150 (\$1,500). These new single-channel beasts were designed for satellite rigs, but according to Groove Tubes, they're great for anyone who wants a two-knob ticket to big tone heaven. The Slaves have volume and presence controls and can be rackmounted, installed in a Classic top box that allows various speaker options, or mounted in a 1x12 combo package with



The all-tube Fender Prosonic pumps 60 watts into two 10" speakers and has a unique 3-way rectifier circuit.

space for additional rackmount gear. Both feature footswitchable parallel effects loops and class AB and class A normal or gnarly switches, and they can digest EL34s, 6L6s, 6550s, and KT88s.

Achtung! German rock scientists Hughes and Kettner unleash the Tri-Amp (\$2,299), an advanced tube head that packs three discrete preamps for clean, crunch, and lead sounds, plus a four-6L6 power amp that even changes circuits for each mode. The Tri-Amp features a simplified front panel for easy access to its vast array of clean to super distortion tones and has a built-in Red Box for direct cabinet sounds. The Tri-Amp can also be upgraded to MIDI via the optional MSM1 MIDI module. Wunderbar.

Seattle, Washington's Junior Amps debuted their Junior (\$949), a 50-watt 1x12 or 2x10 tube combo with volume, treble, middle, shape, and bass controls, as well as an effects loop with a blend knob. The Junior Bee (\$1,449) offers the same features as the Junior, along with three-knob reverb/tremolo.

Laney's newest noisemakers include the 5881-powered Alliance 100 watt head and 50-watt 2x12 combo. These dual-channel amps offer classic American clean and British overdrive tones and feature tube-driven reverb and effects loops.

Dean Markley has six new low-cost amps ranging from the 10-watt K15 (\$99) to the potent K150 (\$499), a 150-watter with a patented DVM

module that lets you choose from, gad, 256 overdrive variations.

One of the highlights of our amp treks occurred at the Marshall booth, but it wasn't entirely due to the Brits' tough-sounding new 30-watt combos. True, the JTM 310 (\$799) and JTM 312 (\$859) are bitchin' little 2x10 and 1x12 tube amps that feature reverb, effects loops, speaker-emulated low-Z outs, 5881 output sections, and footswitchable high-gain modes. Marshall's secret weapon, however, was a band called Storyville, who cranked their decidedly non-NAMM rock through these and other Marshall/Vox products in a dinky trailer nearby.

Matchless' Mark Sampson has obviously been busy with the soldering iron. The EL84-powered Hurricane (\$1,499) is the newest member of Matchless' 15-watt clan. It features a 12" Celestion speaker, volume, tone, master, and tremolo speed and depth controls, plus line-out and extension-speaker jacks. The Chieftain 210 (\$1,899), a single-channel reverb combo, uses a pair of EL34 output tubes to pump 35 watts into its dual Celestion 10s. Controls include volume, reverb, active mid and low boost, passive treble and brilliance, and a master volume. The Chieftain 212 (\$1,999) is the same amp with dual Celestion 12s. The Hot-box (\$399) is a two-channel, class A preamp/overdrive pedal with dual 12AX7s and a manly high-voltage power supply.



Mesa's Revolver spun the heads of many a Leslie fan.

MASTER & MENTOR

THE REAL DEAL. When people talk about the *Patent Applied For* Humbucker, they're actually referring to Seth Lover's patent. Seth invented the humbucker pickup back in 1955 while working as a design engineer at Gibson. And now, some forty years later, a "student" of Seth's by the name of Seymour W. Duncan pays homage to his mentor. Announcing the SH-55 Seth Lover Model® Humbucker. An extremely faithful recreation of the 1955 original.

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Seth E. Lover

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Back to the Future

Brian Moore's MC-1 is a classy route to humbucker heaven.



The great-playing Pacifica 302S is Yamaha's new rootsy rocker.

Our pals at Mesa Boogie rolled out some groovy new tone machines this year. The Subway Rocket (\$449) is a 20-watt 1x10 combo with footswitchable clean and lead channels, treble, middle, bass, and contour controls, parallel effects loop, direct-recording output, and a speaker mute switch. The DC-3 (\$749; head \$695) is an all-tube 35-watt combo with a single 12" Celestion Vintage 30 speaker, 5-band graphic EQ, parallel effects loop, and a recording output. Mesa also introduced a 100-watt version of their popular DC-5. Named in honor of everyone's favorite jumbo jet, the DC-10 (\$1,095; head \$995) packs a graphic EQ, parallel effects loop, and a recording out. Low-

wattage fans will appreciate Mesa's 20/20 (\$499). It delivers 20 watts per channel of EL84 power and consumes only one rack space.

The McIntyre SPL 3-R Bluesmaker (\$899) is a class A stereo amp with reverb, effects loop, and speaker emulation. This all-tube rackmount design takes up two rack spaces, delivers three watts per channel, and is ideally suited for recording or late-night apartment jams.

With Ed safely disguised as a lumberjack, Peavey introduced the 5150 212 (\$1,150), a 60-watt combo version of the 5150 head that uses a pair of Sheffield 12" speakers—the same speaks featured in 5150 4x12 cabs. The merry Meridians' new TransTube models range in power from 15 to 200 watts. The Audition 110 (\$250), Bandit 112S (\$430), Rage 158 (\$100), Express 112S (\$370), Envoy 110 (\$250), Special 212S (\$550), Blazer 158 (\$150), and Studio Pro 112 (\$300) all fea-

ture patent-applied-for circuitry designed to emulate the sound and feel of Peavey tube amps. According to company literature, the TransTube power amp reacts like a tube output stage and responds to increased preamp gain with smooth, natural compression. Some of the studlier TransTubes are also equipped with an exclusive T-Dynamics control that lets you dial from full to 10% of rated output power.

Hey, knuckleheads, Rivera's new K-55 (\$1,095) packs the same features as its aggressive 100-watt brother in a power configuration better suited for recording, small clubs, and children's parties. The dual-channel K-55 Knucklehead features an all-tube preamp, active effects loop with send and return level controls, post-power-amp line out, and Rivera's exclusive Ninja boost.

Rocktron's Velocity 120 power amp (\$499) delivers 60 watts per

channel and features silent power up and down, a front-panel definition control that magically allows you to sound louder without actually turning up the amp, and an array of protection devices that'll prevent your new Velocity from turning into a miniature Chernobyl when you least expect it.

Roland's AC-100 (\$1,095) acoustic amp has a 12" speaker powered by a 50-watt amplifier, plus two 5" speakers, each powered by a separate 25-watt amp, for the stereo effects. Features include digital stereo chorus and reverb, mike and guitar channels with separate 3-band EQ, anti-feedback circuitry, a tonal shape switch, effects loop, and stereo XLR and 1/4" line outs.

Just when you thought it was safe to ignore those annual ear exams, along comes Shrapnell. This \$3,395 200-watt rock Godzilla uses six 6550 output tubes and features clean/crunch and overdrive channels, switchable negative feedback for American- and British-style power amp response, optical channel-switching, and a chrome-plat-



The JTM 312 (L) and JTM 310 are Marshall's 30-watt contenders to the tube combo throne.

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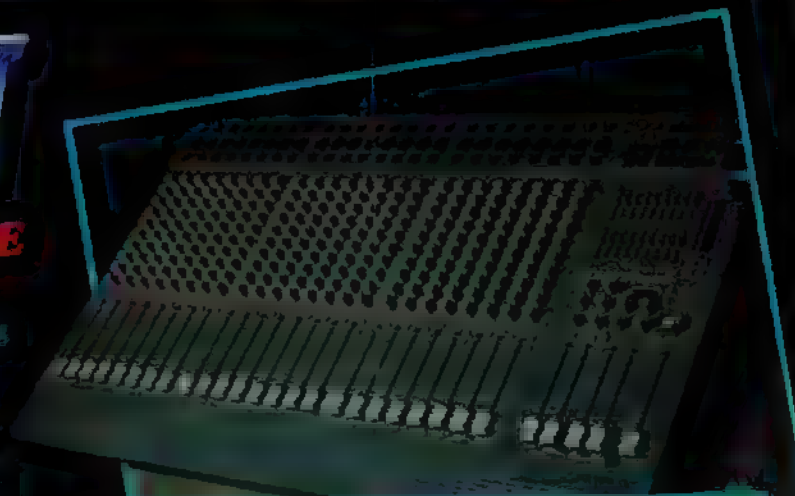
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ed, nuclear-resistant steel chassis. Shrapnell's .5V12 High SPL/High Dispersion cabinet (\$1,595) has six Celestion Vintage 30 speakers arranged to provide nearly hemispherical sound dispersion. Shrapnell's motto is "Heavy artillery for the modern rock revolution," so all you peacenik folkies better slither

into your holes before it's too late!

Soldano's Reverb-O-Sonic combos (\$1,475/2x10; \$1,559/4x10 or 2x12) feature clean and crunch channels, preamp and master-volume controls, tube-driven reverb, effects loop, reverb level, bass, middle, treble, and presence knobs, and noise-free channel-switching.

If George Jetson had owned a guitar amp, it undoubtedly would have resembled the Tone King Continental (\$2,599). This radical-looking 40-watt piggyback combo is designed to deliver maximum '50s chic onstage or in your living room. The Continental features four 6V6 output tubes, tremolo,

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Back to the Future

spring reverb, dual footswitchable channels, and a lead channel half-power switch. The open-back 3D cabinet (included) has two 12" Tone King 33 speakers and removable tapered legs. Amp and speaker cabs are constructed from 9-ply Baltic birch and are covered in hand-stitched Naugahyde. When it comes to the farthest out, the Continental wins big.

Trace Elliot is best known for their bass and acoustic guitar rigs, but now they've stepped boldly into the tube fracas with the Trident and Bonneville heads and combos. The Trident H-100 (\$2,499), a three-channel 100-watt beast, features an all-tube signal path, EQ-style and voicing controls, pentode/triode switching, variable damping, and a biasing switch for 6L6 or EL34 operation. The Trident C50 (\$2,899) 50-watt 2x12 combo offers the same three-channel preamp as the H-100. The Bonneville (\$1,899), a single-channel 100-watter, has dual footswitchable master volumes and a 3-way style switch that reconfigures and rebias the preamp circuitry. The Bonneville C50 (\$2,099) sports the same goodies in a 50-watt 1x12 format.

VHT's ferocious new offerings include the Pittbull Fifty/CL (\$1,299), a 50-watt, two-channel head with a switchable rectifier mode, series/parallel effects loop, and switchable channel gain. A 100-watt version is available for \$1,599. The Pittbull Fifty/ST (\$1,099) is a reverb-equipped head version of their popular Fifty/Twelve combo. The fan-cooled Two/Ninety/Two power amp (\$1,295) delivers 95 watts per channel of KT88 power and takes up only two rack spaces. Its litter mate, the model Two/Fifty/Two (\$995) pumps out 50 watts of fan-cooled EL34 power per channel.

EFFECTS/PREAMPS

Ever since "digital" was added to the short list of big words guitar players throw around, analog pedals have ridden in the back of the techno bus. That situation is changing rapidly, however, thanks to greatly rekindled interest in all things vintage—especially funky stompboxes. The number of new pedal introductions hit a high unseen since the late '70s, but in no way does this mean the high-tech areas are slacking. Companies with big stakes in digital will always have new products to make guitar playing a groovier experience.

Roland's flagship "V" system, which has about as much in common with vintage as the Pope has with Tom of Finland, rode in on a promotional tsunami timed to make sure all dealers and journalists were facing the right way when they popped the cork. By



Roland's \$2,700 VG-8 takes digital processing into the semi-virtual realm.

comparison, stompbox makers were the guys selling hot dogs in the parking lot.

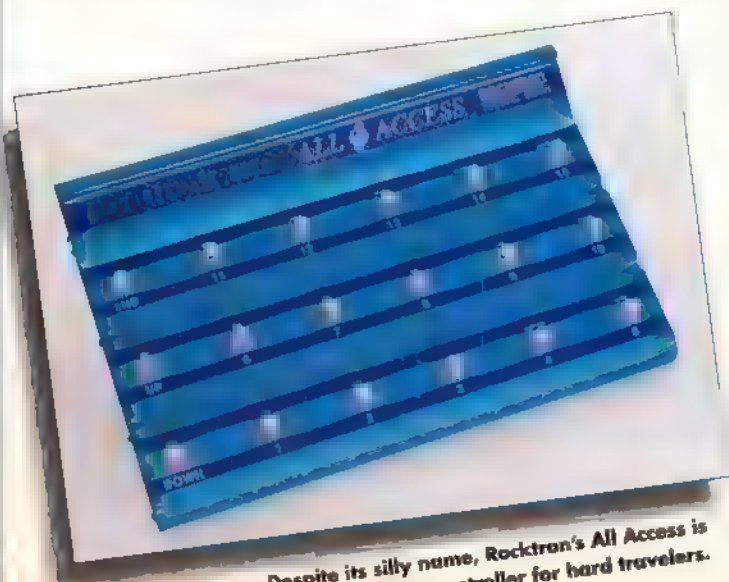
ART's Xtreme (\$249) is a combination floor-mounted analog distortion unit and digital effects processor with drive, high, low, and parametric mid controls, and 32 reverb, flange, chorus, delay, and pitch-shift presets. The MR-1 (\$169) packs 16 digital reverb presets into one small box for use anywhere a little 'verb is needed. The Acoustic (\$239) features analog and digital circuitry to provide acoustic players with sophisticated EQ and digital effects for live or recording situations. Tube nuts will dig the ART 460 (\$499), a combination tube preamp and digital effects processor that offers five types of distortion plus compression, limiting, noise gate, expander, reverb, delay, chorus, flange, tremolo, pitch shift, and more.

Roland's scruffy cousin Boss debuted the BD-2 Blues Driver (\$119). This little stomper has level, tone, and gain knobs, and is designed to deliver a range of vintage amp tones. The HR-2 Harmonist

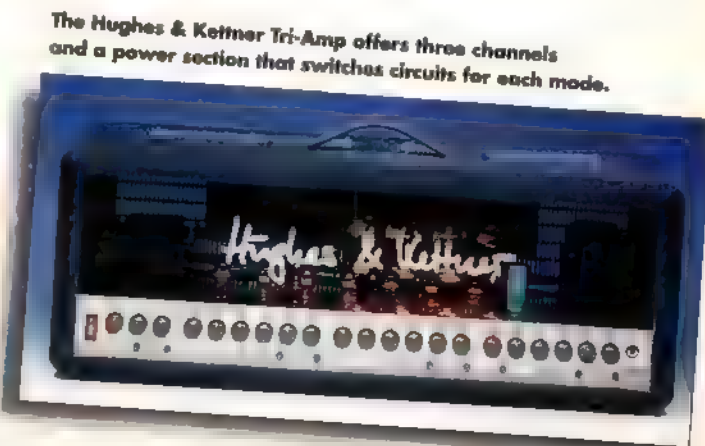
(\$229) adds intelligent pitch shifting and two-voice harmony to your guitar signal thanks to its key selector and voice controls. A special detector input assures correct pitch detection so you can use the HR-2 with other effects. The OD-2R Turbo Overdrive (\$119) offers level, tone, drive, and turbo controls, plus a remote jack that lets you select the turbo function via an optional footswitch. The DD-5 Digital Delay (\$229) provides 11 delay modes, a tempo input for tapping in delay times on the fly, and a reverse mode for real-time backward guitar sounds.

Crate's GFX1000 digital stereo processor (price TBA) delivers 100 presets with programmable parameters for reverb, delay, chorusing, flanging, tremolo, and other guitar-oriented effects. The half-rack unit has a built-in chromatic tuner and a unique mounting system that secures the unit under an amp handle or to a mike stand.

One of the wildest tremolos we spotted was Custom Audio Electronics' Super Tremolo (\$349). This device has two independent sets



Despite its silly name, Rocktron's All Access is a cool MIDI foot controller for hard travelers.



The Hughes & Kettner Tri-Amp offers three channels and a power section that switches circuits for each mode.

BACK to the Future

of rate and depth controls, plus a mode switch that changes the modulation from a triangle wave to a square wave. The 9VAC-powered Super Tremolo also doubles as an active splitter with one direct out and two trem outs at line or instrument levels.

DOD's 200-series stompbox reissues include the 201 Phasor (\$100), 250 Overdrive/Preamp (\$90), 280 Compressor (\$100), and 440 Envelope Filter (\$100). All are built to original specs and feature mechanical footswitches and idiot-resistant die-cast boxes. The G7 Guitar FX processor/Preamp (\$300) offers analog compression and distortion, 2-band parametric EQ, and modulation effects like

ART's MR-1 is an easy-to-use digital reverb with 16 presets.

chorus, flanger, phaser, and pitch shift. The rack-mount device has 30 factory presets and 30 user slots, and changes programs via MIDI or FS300 footswitch.

Digital Music Corp's VooDoo Lab pedals include the Overdrive (\$100), a vintage-style OD with very hot output, the Bosstone (\$100)—uh, guess what this is a clone of—the Proctavia (\$120), a Tychobrahe-flavored octave fuzz for anal-retentive pickers, and the Tremolo (\$120). Digital's System Mix Plus dual line effects mixer (price TBA) features cabinet simulation, headphone amp with direct and monitor level controls, MIDI-controlled stereo volume, XLR balanced outs, and separately grounded 1/4" and MIDI feed-through jacks.



bounces the sound between channels or amps. The TVP-1 Tremolo Volume Plus (\$216) is a combination tremolo and active volume pedal that offers sine and trapezoidal waveforms, foot-operated speed control, and an attenuator for the volume control. Dunlop's DCR-1SR Crybaby rackmount wah (\$500) has four controller inputs, six preset tonal ranges, 5-band graphic EQ, and dry, wet/buffered, and wet/dry outputs.

Dunlop's newest MXR reissues include the Phase 100, a phase shifter classic (\$175), and the Blue Box (\$110), an eccentric little demon that produces a note an octave above and two octaves below your fingered note.

The Ibanez Tube King overdrive pedal (\$200) has neat gold metal-flake paint and features a 12AX7 tube, noise reduction, and 3-band EQ.

Speaking of tubes, Junior Amps' Wirley-Verb (\$449) is the quintessential tube effects unit.

One of the show hits was Dunlop's reissue Uni-Vibe (\$TBA). Arguably the best thing to happen to guitar tone since Hendrix, this killer-sounding box packs all the original features, is reportedly going to be insanely inexpensive compared to an original, and can be controlled remotely via the Speed Controller pedal (\$TBA). The TS-1 Tremolo Stereo Plus (\$175) performs cool mono and stereo trem effects and features intensity, shape, and speed controls, plus an auto-panning mode that

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This rack- or cabinet-mounted stereo spring reverb/tremolo offers stereo spring reverb tone, level, blend, and tank peak controls, plus vibrato/tremolo speed and drive.

The Reflex (\$499), Lexicon's new MIDI stereo digital reverb, features eight high-quality effects and comes loaded with 112 factory presets and 128 user registers. A rapid parameter adjustment system allows instant access to decay, delay, and effects-level settings, and an advanced programming mode lets you delve into the deeper reaches of each algorithm.

Marshall's JFX-1 (\$899) is a guitar-oriented stereo digital MIDI signal processor with a variety of extremely cool-sounding chorus/flange, delay, reverb, and multi-effects programs. The rackmount unit has 50 editable factory presets, 77 user memory slots, a switch that allows instant wet/dry signal tweaks, and an intuitive, knob-based operating system that makes programming a no-tears proposition, even if you lose the manual.

The V-Twin Rack Preamp (\$399), Mesa's rackmount version of the popular V-Twin pedal, packs two selectable clean sounds, two lead modes, and a mix control for a third footswitchable sound. The Revolver (price TBA) features a 90-watt Celestion 12" speaker in an open-back enclosure that rotates inside a vented cabinet. More compact and full-range sounding than a Leslie, the Revolver is a brainy, back-saving alternative for players who simply must have a spinning speaker onstage or in the studio. An included footswitch provides on/off and slow/fast functions.

Morley's JD-10 pedal (\$198), named after Hellecaster twangster Jerry Donahue, is a multi-function overdrive/distortion device that can be used as a speaker simulator, preamp, or headphone amp. The JD-10 features a drive-depth knob, rock/classic and speaker-simulation switches, and treble, middle, bass, and output controls.

The Rocktron VooDu Valve



The Bonneville and Trident stacks and combos are Trace Elliot's new all-tube guitar blasters.

preamp (\$1,199) combines DSP processing and tube technology. The single-rack-space unit features high- and low-gain tube selections, 4-band parametric EQ, and a variety of effects including chorus, phase shift, wah, tremolo, reverb,

pitch shift, delay, and speaker simulation. The VooDu responds to MIDI program change and eight-parameter continuous-controller info, and is also equipped with XLR and 1/4" inputs and outputs and HUSH noise reduction. The

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Replifex guitar effects processor (\$999) features effects similar to Rocktron's Chameleon and Intellifex units, but offers a "spillover" function that allows the reverb or delay from your current preset to carry over to the next preset for smoother program changes. The Replifex also provides dual amplifier channel-switching and realtime control of delay times and modulation rates. Rocktron's All Access Touring Model MIDI Foot Controller (\$899) is built to withstand road abuse from even the most determined thrashers. It features an aluminum housing, 18 metal switches (each with an LED on/off status indicator), large 16-character fluorescent display, and a 7-pin MIDI jack for phantom power.

With much fanfare and trumpet blaring, Roland rolled out their \$2,695 VG-8 system with

exclusive COSM (composite object sound modeling) technology. COSM's two modes, variable guitar modeling, and harmonic restructure modeling let you manipulate guitar sounds in a "virtual" domain. You can slap on different types of "pickups," move pickups and even polepieces around, emulate various amps and microphones, and of course dial up entirely synthesized sounds. The VG-8 requires a Roland GK-2A divided pickup, another \$250, but according to the company, instead of using pitch and level information like a MIDI synthesizer, the VG-8 processes the actual waveform of each string, thus preserving more of the guitar's expressiveness.

Roland's GP-100 guitar preamp/processor (\$1,095) also uses COSM to emulate a variety of amps, speaker configurations, and mike placements. The GP-100's volume, presence, and tone knobs allow quick tone tweaks, and the device offers digital effects like reverb, chorus, delay, pitch shift, and ring modulation. Other items include dual stereo outputs, dual effects loops, 200 factory presets, and 200 user patches.

Sovtek's stompbox reissues include the Small Stone phase shifter (\$79), a '70s classic with a color switch for super swirling effects, and the Big Muff π (\$69), a definitive box from the days when sexual innuendoes were cool and fuzz was that stuff on your chin. Both of these Russian-made boxes feature military-grade transistors and come in neat little wooden boxes that look

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GUITAR/AMP Giveaway Gods



Many of our giveaways offer a plethora of high-tech devices for players who embrace the "more is more" gear attitude, but killer tone is often the result of just a great guitar and amp. This month's giveaway, a \$2,858 celebration of sonic simplicity, features a Valley Arts IML 7M solidbody and a Soldano Reverb-O-Sonic amplifier—both in red, the color of rock!

The IML 7M may sound like a Canadian zip code, but this slick-playing warrior packs brainy accoutrements like a 24-fret maple neck with patented interlock neck joint, a vintage-style Wilkinson trem bridge, Duncan pickups in the rock-approved hum/sing/sing configuration, a two-piece ash body, gold hardware, and scientific-sounding ML2 tuned-resonance technology for corpulent highs and crispy lows. Price? \$1,299

Guitar and amps—even the best ones—require a certain chemistry to make great music. Yes, lessons can help, but if your hardware ain't happily exchanging bodily electrons, your tone's gonna be about as inspiring as the nocturnal activities of a Guatemalan tree sloth. Try as we might, we couldn't find a better match for the IML 7M than Soldano's superb Reverb-O-Sonic 4x10 combo. This \$1,559 beauty packs 50 watts of 5881 tube power, silent channel switching, three-spring tube reverb, tube-buffered effects loop, and the attention to detail that's made Soldano the choice of top players like Eric Clapton and Gary Moore.

This dynamic duo will give you tone for days, but unless you make your mark on the entry form and get it to us pronto, the only thing you'll be hearing is an earful from some music-store automaton named Gig telling you how much his "pro" rig is going to run ya. Good luck!

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To enter: Print your name and address on the entry card or coupon. Enter as often as you wish, but each entry must be postmarked separately. All entries must be received by May 31, 1995. Entrants to the Guitar Player/Soldano + Valley Arts Giveaway need not subscribe to *Guitar Player*. The winner will be drawn at random. The prizes are non-transferable, and no substitutions are allowed other than those made necessary due to availability by the manufacturer. Should this occur, a replacement of like or greater value will be provided. The winner may be required to sign and return an affidavit of compliance with these rules and a release for the use of his or her name and likeness for publicity purposes without further consideration. This offer is void where prohibited by law, and is subject to all applicable federal, state, and local regulations. Taxes are the sole responsibility of the winner. The Guitar Player/Soldano + Valley Arts Giveaway is not open to employees of Miller Freeman, Inc., and participating manufacturers. Odds of winning depend on the number of entries received. The rules and conditions of the Guitar Player/Soldano + Valley Arts Giveaway may be changed without prior notice. Miller Freeman, Inc., shall be deemed sole interpreter of the rules and conditions.

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The XXL pedal from Tech 21 (\$125) offers a taste of the psychedelic past with new twists for increased flexibility. The device has level and drive knobs, a level-compensated passive tone control, and a unique "warp" function that lets you tweak the harmonic content for a wide range of traditional distortion, tube-amp-style overdrive, and vintage fuzz sounds. Tube Works' famous Tube Driver distortion box is back (price TBA). This Eric Johnson-approved, AC-powered unit uses a single 12AX7 tube and features tube drive, high/low EQ, and output-level controls. Each Driver will be handbuilt by the original designer Brent Butler.

The Zoom 4040 (\$500) is a stereo multi-effects floor unit with dual pedals for expression and volume control. The 4040's 25 effects programs include analog distortions, EQ, wah, amp simulation, modulations, reverbs, delays, pedal pitch bends, ping-pong delays, and more. Effects can be combined up to six at a time and accessed via the unit's 40 factory presets and 40 user memory slots. The 4040 packs built-in ZNR noise reduction and a chromatic tuner, and can also control amp channel switching, external effects, and MIDI devices.

MISCELLANEOUS

Audio Classic's Bias King (\$105) makes amp biasing a piece of cake. Consisting of a special tube socket connected to a digital current meter, the King works by measuring the current draw (in milliamps) of individual output tubes.

L.R. Baggs' Ribbon Transducer (\$89) is a super-thin (.016") pickup that installs under your acoustic guitar's saddle. According to Baggs, the Ribbon offers greatly improved acoustic tone, since it senses primarily the wood instead of the strings. The RT System (\$139) consists of a Ribbon Transducer coupled with a discrete class A preamp that operates for 300-plus hours on a single 9-volt battery. A soundhole-mounted module with volume and treble knobs and an LED battery monitor increase the RT's flexibility for an extra \$34. The Dual Source (\$269) adds a microphone and a mix control to the RT System. Baggs preamps are also available separately.

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902 (\$200). This amp emulator features ten amp modes, low, mid, high, gain, and output knobs, and lead and attack functions. It comes with 1/4" and balanced XLR outs, an FET-buffered bypass footswitch, and a dual-mode select footswitch that lets you scroll through the sounds or preset three distinct tones. The PRX-903 (\$300) packs level, bottom, presence, attack, drive, and output controls, plus a headphone jack, lead and bright switches, and cabinet simulation.

C.S.X. Designs' Signet Multi Trem (\$200-\$250), a killer re-invention of the tremolo bridge, requires only minimal routing and lets you bend any or all of the strings by engaging a switch behind each saddle. Want to bend only the low-E and G strings? No problemo. Pedal steel licks and motorcycle imitations on the same guitar? Go, big daddy. In addition, the wang bar can be placed on either side of the bridge in case you want to experiment with that Jimi/Stevie trem thing.

DiMarzio's Airbucker vintage-style humbuckers include the Air Classic, Air Zone, and Air Norton (\$89 each). They feature reduced magnetic fields for improved sustain and are designed to deliver superior dynamics and richness compared to traditional humbucking pickups.

Seymour Duncan's Seth Lover Humbucker (\$135 nickel; \$139 gold) is an exact replica of the original patent-applied-for pickup that Seth invented for Gibson in 1955. True to its original

design, the Seth features a nickel-plated, nickel-silver cover, custom calibrated Alnico II magnets, and butyrate plastic bobbins. It is not wax-potted. The long-awaited Antiquity P-90s (\$110) come in "soapbar" and "dog ear" versions and feature aged covers, hand-fabricated bobbins, and Dun-Aged Alnico II magnets. Duncan's Jerry Donahue Model lead pickup for Telecasters (\$95) offers Alnico II rod magnets and is wound for increased sustain. The SA-2 Perfect Timbre (\$195) is an acoustic pickup/preamp system with a unique soundboard sensor.

EMG's AS93 and AS125 under-saddle acoustic systems (\$132 each) include a piezo film transducer (the AS93 is 3/32" wide; the AS125 is 1/8" wide), an APA-1 preamp, and a custom-designed endpin jack with battery on/off switch and wiring harness. The EMG-SV active single-coil (\$86) is designed to provide classic Strat sounds without the vintage hum. The SV has staggered alnico polepieces and an internal low-impedance preamp, and is available individually or as part of a complete system.

Fishman's Powerbridge mates piezo saddle pickups with an all-steel Strat-style trem bridge (\$250) or Tele-style bridge (\$179). Installed in your Strat, Tele, or other guitar, the Powerbridge provides excellent "acoustic" sound by itself, or in combination with your stock pickups. The Connection DI box (\$100) provides a balanced stereo signal from the Power Bridge

to amps or mixers.

Musitech's SA-1 speaker attenuator/direct box (\$139) is designed specifically for small amps. The device provides a safe 8Ω load at all volume levels, handles up to 25 watts, and features a record out with smooth 4x12 or bright 2x10 sounds. The line out function can be employed with larger amps, provided the speaker attenuator is not used.

Fresh stompboxes from Rack Systems include the Toestie (\$125), a handmade '60s-style fuzz, and the Red Llama (\$150), a classic-style overdrive designed to blast your amp's front end into the next county—killer, dude!

Grooves Tubes' head engineer and steel-guitar whiz Red Rhodes has re-introduced his line of Velvet Hammer guitar and bass pickups. The Hammers feature a unique isolated-coil bobbin design that allows the Alnico V magnet/polepieces to be moved up and down for precise string-volume adjustments.

Now that you've finally got your noiseless digital home recording system together, it's time to funkify it with RSP Technologies' Saturator (\$699), a dual-channel, two-space unit that uses a pair of 12AX7 tubes and special circuitry to add varying degrees of saturation and "warmth" to your digital recordings. Features include drive and output controls for each channel, large VU meters switchable between saturation and output, and XLR and 1/4" inputs and outputs. ■

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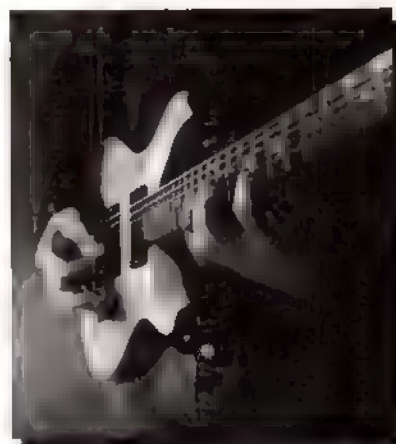
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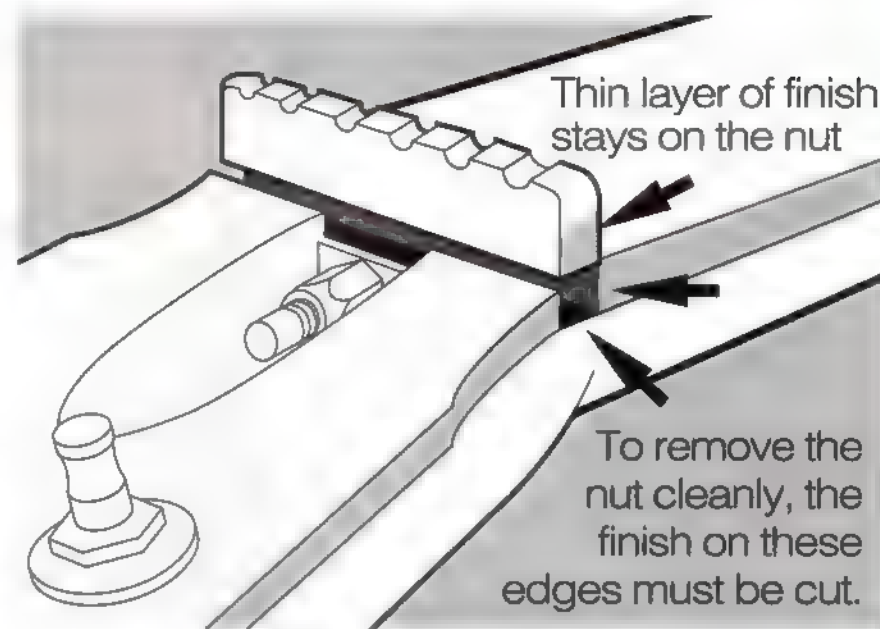
While working on the February '95 "Hardbodies" cover story, I had the opportunity to carefully scrutinize the neck, fretwork, finish, nut, action and setup, and hardware of 36 new guitars. Knowing what I looked for may come in handy whenever you're shopping for a new guitar. My April column covered neck construction, adjustability, and relief—please be sure you read it first, especially the part about neck relief.

Finish: The 36 guitars I looked at had great finishes—period. Gibson and Fender always had professional finishes, and the high-quality finishes of ESP, Tokai, Yamaha, and other imports of the 1980s forced all others to learn how to paint. We thought some color combinations were better than others, but the only finish detail we could possibly criticize was a slight wrinkling—or "shrinking back"—of some color coats underneath clear topcoats, and this is normal for many solid colors, especially metallics. Chandler's "hologram-sparkle" finish and Hamer's wood sculpting/finishing abilities particularly impressed me!

Nut: Most of the nuts were slotted too low, and the open strings buzzed on the first fret when the necks were adjusted straight. A nut cut low for a relieved neck will often be too low when the neck is straight. For a nut to play in both a relieved and a straight neck adjustment, the nut-maker must know string gauge, action preference, and the customer's playing style—and even then it's easy to file the nut slots too low.

Unless you *know* that you will never play without relief, shop for a guitar with a slightly high nut, play it for a week or two, and then have the nut height and overall action adjusted to your playing style. Remember that nuts can be replaced or raised for a reasonable fee, although most new guitars have finished-over nut ends. Any finish must be carefully cut when a nut is removed (see diagram) to minimize chipping. Sometimes professionally applied heat can soften a finish enough to allow it to be cut without chipping. Regardless, most nut removal chips can be cosmetically touched up by a patient professional.

Hardware: At one time innovators like Gib-



son, Fender, and Gretsch each had original, instantly recognizable parts. Then design patents expired or got ignored, and a "melting pot" of traditional hardware clones became available to everyone. Many new guitars use at least some generic parts, although some have original hardware. When you want your ax to be *seen* as well as heard, it's refreshing to have different-looking hardware, as long as it's functional. "Cheap" hardware, like lousy guitars, has become a thing of the past. One gripe I do have is using white Strat-copy knobs on totally non-Strat-style guitars. It looks dumb, and several of the new guitars I looked at had this fault. Get a life!

Action/setup: Many new guitars are setup well, except for excess relief. Personalized setup is done after the sale by the store or by the new guitar's owner. Try to allow a break-in period of at least several weeks before doing a great setup. If you're not afraid to adjust your truss rod and raise or lower the bridge saddles, you can do it yourself. Start with a straight neck, and then try a relieved neck. Lower or raise the strings to see which you prefer, or have your local repair tech do it for you. Every

player should experience a variety of different neck setups.

General comments: The quality and variety of the guitars we reviewed in February was excellent. Your chances of ending up with a new-guitar "lemon" are almost nil in this mid-price range. So if you see an instrument you like, buy it before somebody else does—even if it does need a little tailoring. The manufacturer *shouldn't* be doing the final setup anyway! Looks, hardware, and electronics aside, shop for a guitar with a reasonable action and setup, a straight neck with level frets, and a slightly high nut.

In general, there are two new-guitar shopping choices: Go for the lowest price and take care of setup yourself, or pay a higher price to a dealer who offers setup and adjustment as part of the sale. Regardless of which choice you make, we guitar "tailors" can end up making your new purchase fit just right. ■

Director of Technical Operations at Stewart-MacDonald's Guitar Shop Supply, Dan Erlewine is author of Guitar Player Repair Guide (Miller Freeman Books).

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solidbody rigged with ten tunable harp strings, deGruy melds clean, swinging fingerstyle chops, ringing harp arpeggios, and whizzing, tinkling flourishes into a kaleidoscopic whole. With wry and irreverent humor, he tackles everything from

Coltrane's "Naima" to "If I Only Had A Brain," with time out for an impressionistic/ragtime take on Sam The Sham's "Woolly Bully." Picture Pee-Wee Herman with Lenny Breau's chops. DeGruy's solo guitar is alternately out, melodic, sassy,

Listen To The Color Of Your Dreams

Picks



• **King Crimson, *Thrak***, Virgin: After 14 years, Crimson's full-length return is more subdued than you might expect. While the explosive thump of "Thrak" recalls classic KC caterwaul like "Neotica," the accent is on graceful songs. Belew's soaring voice often dips to a Lennon-like resonance, while Fripp applies ambient sonics and brash twang to Bill Bruford's idiosyncratic syncopations. Levin's bass lines work magically with Trey Gunn's stick, and though the guitars are often understated, they're always deliberate and meaningful.

• **Pond, *The Practice Of Joy Before Death***, Sub Pop: Weird, bleating single-note lines and jagged, harmonic rhythms join with bulging bass lines and crisp, funky drums. Utterly unpredictable indie-rock chock-full of melodic songs, deep textures, and moods that spirit you away with your balance shaken

• **David Torn, *Tripping Over God***, CMP: Threaded with lacy loops and swooping Eastern lines, the deliciously immediate *Tripping* couples Torn's flair for gorgeous modal ostinato with chunky grunge-fusion meltdown. A funky, homebrewed recording that reeks of personality.

• **Tom Fryer With Shattered, *Solo Duo Trio***, Shattered (Private Box 4, LPO East Kew, Victoria 3102, Australia): Triggering samples, manipulating time effects, and exploiting MIDI guitar, Fryer subverts timbre and tone in tactile, deconstructed improv that jiggle, moan, and crash with garbage can percussion and processed oboe. He doesn't settle for wimpy presets either. A startlingly original voice.

• **Bolt Thrower, ...For Victory**, Earache: While offering little respite from the stylistic clichés of most speedcore

bands—double-kick triplets, frenzied downpicking, Luciferian vocals—Bolt Thrower boasts an ungodly wall of scooped-mid overdrive and lightning-rod rhythm figures. The aural equivalent of Thor in a pissy mood.



• **Elliot Sharp/Carbon, *Amusia***, Spectrum (c/o go, Rue De Veeweyde, 1070 Brussels, Belgium): Industrio-tribal funkadelia? Avant-blues-core? E# manages to clash deep funk and cool songcraft against spongy, bristling guitar textures that burst into overdriven flames against the sun-splash of behind-the-nut tweaks and inspired scribbling.

• **Guided By Voices, *Alien Lanes***, Matador: More brilliant, free-associative British Invasion-style psych-pop from the kings of "lo-fi"—but don't let that tag fool you. Despite their dustbin sonics, many of these guitar tones are

sumptuous and biting. Thumbnail-sketch rock with the true spirit of spontaneity.



• **Various Artists, *Come Together: Guitar Tribute To The Beatles Vol. 2***, NYC Records (275 West 10th St., New York, NY 10014): The second installment of instrumental guitarists covering the greatest pop songs ever written. This time it's Robben Ford, Philip deGruy, Michael Hedges, Charlie Hunter, Adam Rogers and Dave Gilmore (from jazz quintet Last Tribe), Robert Quine, Terje Rypdal, and Dave Tranzo. The range of styles is huge, as is the ingenuity and invention behind them. Dave Fiuczynski and Wayne Krantz each tackle "Tomorrow Never Knows"; Krantz plays it loose, clean, and jazzy, while Fuze goes into technodelic overdrive. Your guitar will gently weep

JAMES ROTONDI

and sweet, yet always spontaneous and highly original. A must-hear, but hang on to your jaw. NYC. —AE



Electric Company
A Pert Cyclic Omen

This is music of such harrowing physicality and sonic interest that it's nearly impossible to describe in words, except useless ones like avant-garde, ambient, electronic, or psychedelic. Touchstones might include "Third Stone From The Sun," "Revolution No. 9," and early

Cabaret Voltaire. Created by uniquely overdriven guitar, percussion, bass, voice, and tape loops, these penetrating timbres cover a vast range, and the pieces take on lives of their own. The title track (like all the titles, a cool anagram of the project's name) lurches along in pure, breathy gusts of sparking guitar against an ambient, goth-Latin shuffle and veiled screams. On "Electro Amp Cynic," doors slam shut in a frenzy, morphing into subharmonic kick pulses while a snake chants in a windy desert and planes take off. Performed and produced by Brad Laner, the imaginative Southern California guitarist behind the band Medicine. —JR

Slim Harpo

Hip Shakin'

The Excello Collection

A two-CD collection of primal



postwar records by the Louisiana bluesman who influenced the Rolling Stones, Jimi Hendrix, Stevie Ray Vaughan, and many others. Low-down guitar riffs, spirited solos, and tortured tremolo abound in Harpo's roots-simple fare, which often bears more than a passing resemblance to Jimmy Reed and Bo Diddley. Look for other excellent Excello CD collections of Silas Hogan, Lazy Lester, and swamp-stomping Lightnin' Slim. Excello (dist. by AVI). —JO

Charlie Sexton Sextet

Under The Wishing Tree

Still in his early twenties, Sexton's a veteran who played with Joe Ely at 13, had a hit with "Beat's So Lonely" at 16, and fronted the Archangels with Doyle Bramhall III by age 21. Between his breathy, gutsy vocals and impossible cheekbones, most folks have forgotten that Sexton is an excellent guitarist. Here his rhythm figures vary between elastic, hammer-and-pull chord melody and driving right-hand blast. His leads range from watery and haunting volume-pot swells to sweetly droning double-stop excursions and flesh-tearing fuzz blues. A sophisticated, up-to-date take on roots-rock with passionate songwriting and great arrangements, *Wishing Tree* delivers Sexton to that rarified place everyone assumed he'd get to. —JR

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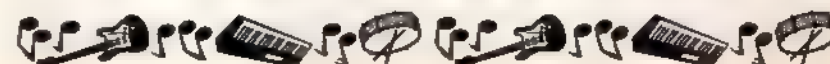
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Doug Sahm

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Laika And The Cosmonauts

The Amazing Colossal Band

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Revisit the spaced-out '70s and uptight early '80s via newly issued CDs of BBC Radio concerts. Recorded at the Paris Theater in '75, Robin Trower is the pick of the litter, with the classic lineup of Trower, Bill Lordan, and Jimmy Dewar powering with Hendrix panache through "Bridge Of Sighs," "Twice Removed From Yesterday," and "Daydream."

Ham-fisted rhythmic support catapults the 1980 portions of U.F.O. into a murky swamp best left untraversed; four ultra-rare '74 tracks with the young, fleet-fingered Michael Schenker generate a few sparks, but no wildfires. Cut at the 1982 Reading Festival, Michael Schenker finds the German Goliath keeping company with Gary Barden, whose gruff vocals are considerably less listenable than Michael's liquid screams.

The Pat Travers Band features nine bombastic guitarfests from the 1980 Reading Festival, with Travers and superior sideman Pat Thrall duking it out on "Snortin' Whiskey" and "Barn Under A Bad Sign." Mick Dyche plays sec-

ond giftiddle on four lesser Travers tracks from '77. *Thin Lizzy Live* documents the band's last U.K. concert, in 1983, with charismatic Phil Lynott fronting pick-mellers Scott Gorham and Brian Robertson. Three years later Lynott was gone, but his music still rings true today. Griffin (Box 87587, Carol Stream, IL 60188).

—JO



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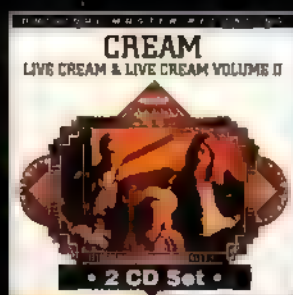


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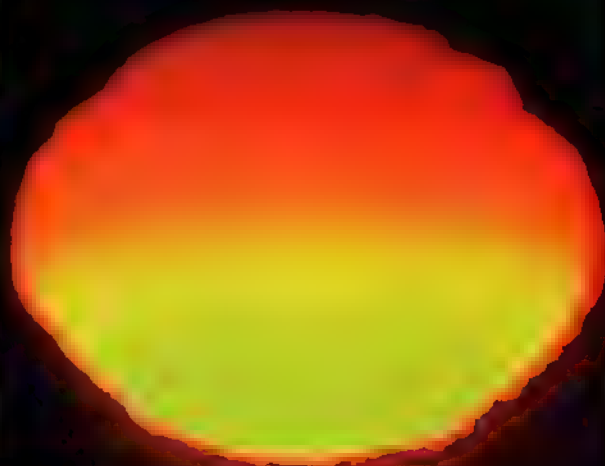
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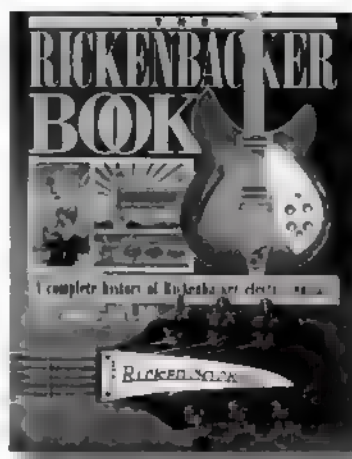
strumental sound bounces between endless summer, lurching polka, spy flick, and spaghetti western themes. Sometimes moody, sometimes trippy, guitarist Mikko Lankinen plays with a big, haunting twang, fast tremolo, and rad wang-bar quiver. Party music supreme. Upstart/Rounder. —AE

PRINT

The Rickenbacker Book

Tony Bacon And Paul Day

This 96-page hardcover digs deep into Rickenbacker history to trace the development of the firm's classic 4-, 6-, and 12-string beauties. Beginning with company pioneers George Beauchamp, Paul Barth, and Adolph Rickenbacker, who teamed to produce the world's



first production electric guitar, the Rick story unfolds through fascinating narrative and gorgeous full-color photos; *especially* intense are John Lennon's trio of 325s. A detailed reference section covers construction, hardware, and cosmetic

details for all Ricks built between 1932 and '92. \$19.95 from GPI Books.

—AT

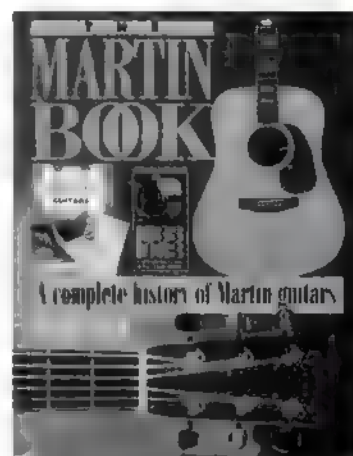
The Martin Book

Walter Carter

Carter's excellent historical tribute tells the Martin story through documented history and the recollections of company chief Chris Martin. Featured among this 108-page hardback's superb color spreads are stunning examples of early 1800s

guitars, prewar and postwar flat-tops, rare archtops, and hollowbody and solidbody electrics. Of utmost collector appeal is the hefty reference section covering models, variations (including general

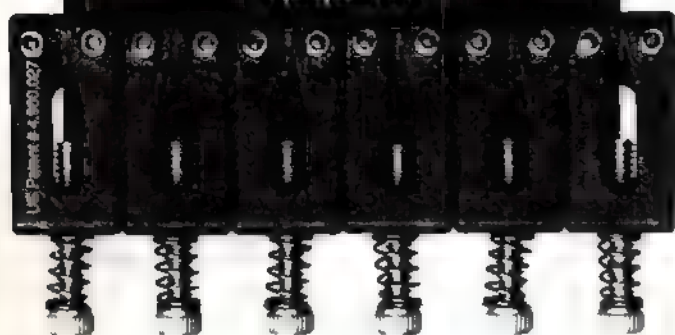
specs and production years), and dating details for all Martins made from 1896 to the present. A thoroughly inside look at America's premier acoustic guitar company. \$22.95 from GPI Books. —AT



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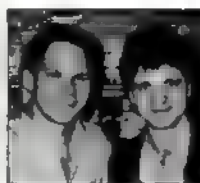


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Leaping Not Sweeping



BY JAMES MURPHY

I FIRST LEARNED ABOUT ARPEGGIOS

the way most young rock players do—via the ultra-fast sweeping techniques of Yngwie and the rest of the '80s neo-classical shred monsters. This narrow perception of such a vital and diverse melodic tool inhibited my playing for years, until I was exposed to more jazz and fusion players and taught myself theory and how to read music.

By linking and arpeggiating diatonic triads across multiple octaves, I discovered how to out-

line more complex chord forms with harmonic extensions. The color tones, which reach to the 13th, work wonderfully in (insert flavor-of-the-month synonym for rock) single-line solos. You can access the same color tones from within scales, but approaching extensions via arpeggios automatically generates wider intervals that are perfect for busting out of linear scale ruts.

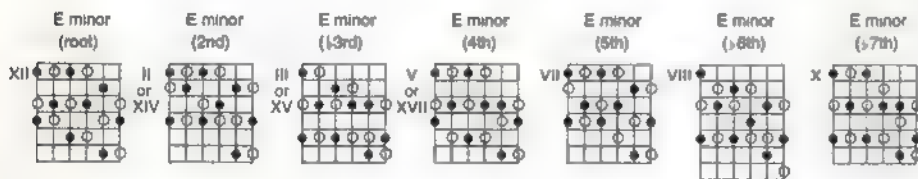
Complex arpeggios are a foundation of jazz and fusion (check out Don Mock's excellent book

Artful Arpeggios), but rockers often overlook these forms because they're too difficult to memorize or apply. This lesson bridges the gap between simple triads and more complex forms. Presented in the metal-friendly key of *E* minor, these patterns are easy to absorb.

The seven fretboard grids in Ex. 1 illustrate the common three-note-per-string *E* minor scale patterns. Each pattern starts on a different scale degree—root, 2nd, ♭3rd, etc. Look at the first grid. Starting on the lowest note (*E*), ascend by playing only those notes indicated by solid black dots. Once you reach the 1st string, descend playing the hollow notes, starting with *A*. You'll hear the line in Ex. 2. Built by stacking diatonic thirds, the ascending and descending arpeggios use all the scale's extensions. The hammer-ons, pull-offs, and alternate picking help create a flowing sound.

Work through the other six grids the same way—black notes ascending, hollow notes descending. Keep it smooth and listen for the linked arpeggiated triads. We'll apply arpeggio extensions to soloing in an upcoming lesson.

Ex. 1



Ex. 2



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Lick Of The Month

DIMINISHED DELIRIUM

THIS MONTH'S DELI TREAT COMES FROM Tucson's Dave Porter, who says: "I was dumbfounded by a dazzling display of dizzying descending diminished notes from the next room as my kids were watching car-

toons. Fortune failed me not as I fingered this furious phrase. This is excellent practice for alternate picking and quickly shifting left-hand positions. Bite into this beast and be brazenly belligerent!"

The musical notation for 'Diminished Delirium' is presented in a dashed box. It features a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is written on a single staff with a 4/4 time signature. The notation includes a series of eighth notes, some beamed together, and a final measure with a whole note. Below the staff, a tablature line shows the corresponding fret numbers: 15, 12, 14, 11, 13, 10, 12, 9, 11, 8, 10, 7, and 8. The tablature is labeled with 'T', 'A', and 'B' at the beginning of the line.

Send us your candidate for Lick Of The Month (preferably notated *and* on cassette), along with a brief explanation of why it's cool and how to play it. If we select your offering, you'll get a funky custom T-shirt that's *only* available to fellow Lick Of The Month club members. Mail your entry to Lick Of The Month, Gui-

tar Player, 411 Borel Ave. #100, San Mateo, CA 94402. Include your name, address, phone number, and Polaroids of close family members. Materials won't be returned. We'll contact you if your lick is chosen, so *please* don't call the office to check the status of your submission.



Clean 'N Sober Slide

BY BILL WHITE ACRE

ger to each of the strings beneath your slide. Mute each inactive string with its designated finger. As soon as the melody shifts strings, drop the appropriate "damper" finger onto the unused string to silence it. Keep this damper in place until the melody requires you to lift it and pluck the string.

To develop this technique, first practice basic scales. Examples 1 and 2 show an A minor pentatonic and C major scale, respectively. Play and mute the fourth string with thumb (p), third string with index (i), second string with middle (m), and first string with ring (a).

Once you can play these

scales cleanly with no drunken slurs, use your newly developed slide sobriety to make up melodies over simple chord progressions. If you fall off the wagon, your guitar will remind you it's time to clean up your act. Keep at it—this muting action soon becomes second nature.

THERE ARE TWO MAIN

technical barriers to playing clear, clean melodies with a bottleneck or metal slide: playing in tune and preventing unintended strings from sounding as you shift positions. For this lesson, we'll focus on the latter.

You may be familiar with the slurred ghost notes that result from moving a slide along strings. These tones cloud your melody and make your guitar sound tipsy. Here's a way to avoid them: Play fingerstyle and assign a picking-hand fin-

A pentatonic minor

C major scale

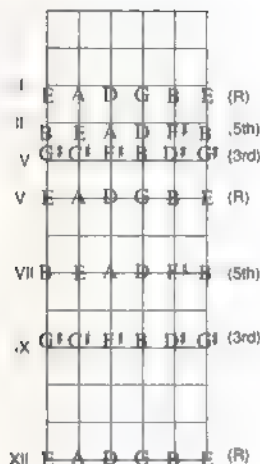
The musical notation shows two scales: an A pentatonic minor scale and a C major scale. Each scale is written on a single staff with a treble clef. The A pentatonic minor scale is shown with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The C major scale is shown with a key signature of no sharps or flats. Below each staff, a tablature line shows the corresponding fret numbers. The A pentatonic minor scale is labeled with 'T', 'A', and 'B' at the beginning of the line. The C major scale is labeled with 'T', 'A', and 'B' at the beginning of the line.

Power Harmonics

BY MATT SMITH



Ex. 1



YOU CAN PLAY INTRIGUING CHORDS AND scales with harmonics. Ex. 1 provides a fretboard map of the usable ones; keep it handy for long-term reference.

To play clean harmonics, lightly touch the string at the indicated point and remove your finger immediately after plucking the string. While most harmonics are located directly above specific frets, the stratospheric ones occur about a quarter-fret in front of the 2nd and 3rd frets. Another set lies a quarter-fret behind the 4th fret. Take a few minutes to discover their exact positions.

As indicated, each string's harmonics form an arpeggiated major triad. (We won't quibble over an octave jump here and there.) Ex. 2 shows how you can combine these overtones to form useful major and minor triads.

Ex. 3 is a descending and ascending *E* minor pentatonic scale. Try integrating fretted notes and harmonics,

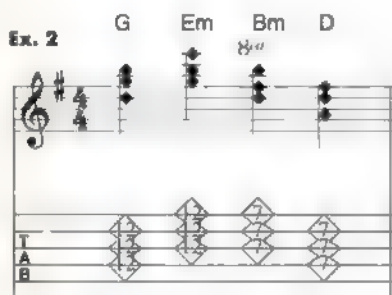
as in Ex. 4, an *E* natural minor scale

Play the *A* Mixolydian run in Ex. 5 and then try it over *A7*. Blues harmonics?

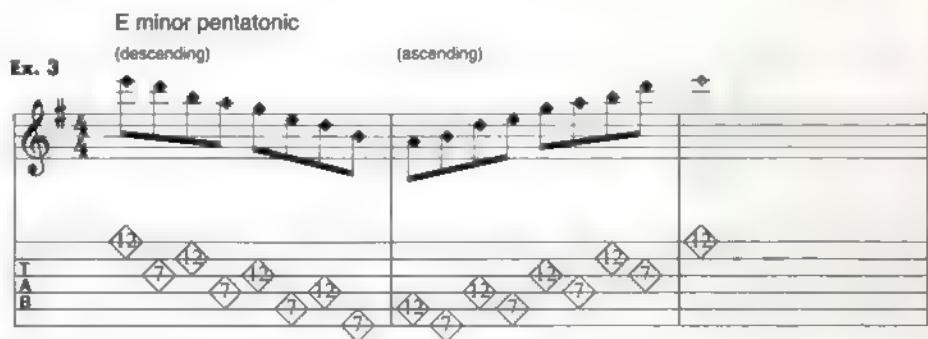
Ex. 6 shows how to play *E7* and *A7* arpeggios with harmonics.

A little theory goes a long way here. Build your own chiming scales and chords, and work them into your music.

Ex. 2



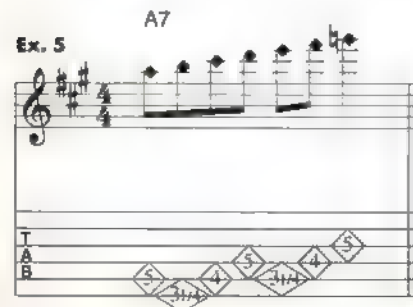
Ex. 3



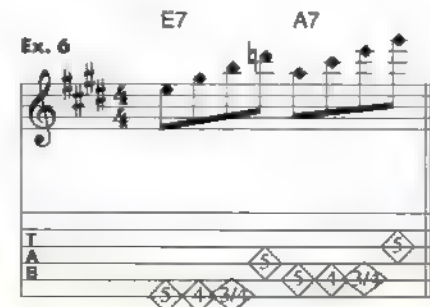
Ex. 4



Ex. 5



Ex. 6



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Steve Khan

On Transcribing And Improvising

TRANSCRIBING IS AN INTROVERTED, LONELY PURSUIT.

Sometimes you don't think anyone else in the world is doing it until you get together with other musicians and realize it's a fairly universal activity. For instance, sax players transcribe John Coltrane, Lester Young, Wayne Shorter, and Charlie Parker. Transcribing and analyzing solos is great as long as you don't forget the artist was *improvising*, and not thinking things out. As you get familiar with a player's style, you start making connections, such as noticing the same rhythmic phrase but with different notes.

Misconceptions about improvising put pressure on less-experienced players. The idea that you shouldn't repeat yourself is a jazz myth. Basically, you have a vocabulary you draw from. In an improvisation, you may play something you've never played before. That's a great feeling. If I come away from an evening having experienced a couple of exhilarating moments, I feel good.



BY B. B. KING

String English

I PLAY MOSTLY DOWNSTROKES—WHICH IS WHY I'M NOT VERY fast—with a medium pick. I hold it with my thumb and index finger, and control it with my middle finger. I attack the strings harder than most people. At times I fight the strings for presence, to get that force.

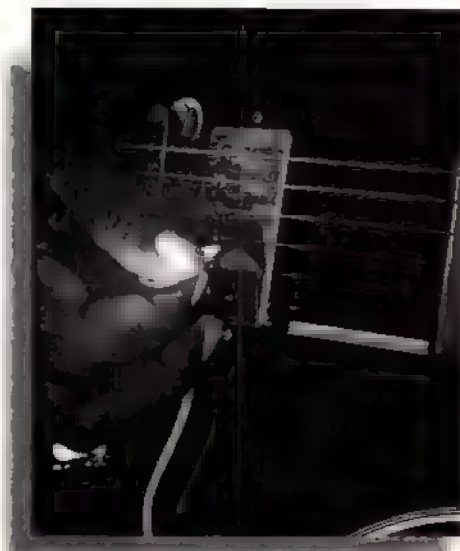
Most of the time I don't hold the pick completely flat against the strings. I turn it so that it has a bit of an angle (Photo 1). When I want to mellow out, I hold the pick this way and get midway between the end of the neck and the bridge. But when I want a real staccato sound, I play near the bridge and hold the pick flat (Photo 2).

I take the extra effort to make sure I'm hitting the string where and how I want to hit it. It's almost like playing pool: You're going to use a certain bit of English. ■

Photo #1



Photo #2





David Grissom's Big Rhythm

AS TOLD TO ANDY ELLIS

OPEN STRINGS AND HYBRID PICKING

ing are key to David Grissom's churning, ringing rhythm assault. This progression features arpeggiated chords composed of both fretted and open strings. It offers a musical way to practice pick-and-finger technique, and the haunting melodic bends add a country flavor. "Bend with your 1st finger," David advises. "Pull down towards the floor."

As indicated, use middle (m) and ring (a) fingers on the open B and E strings; flatpick the rest. "Keep the strings ringing," Grissom reminds us, "and be sure to emphasize the descending fifth-string line." Notice how the first and second endings approach the destination G# differently. "Use this passage in an E vamp when you want subtle melodic movement," suggests David.

♩ = 100-132

The 12-Point Star

A CONVERSATION WITH PAT MARTINO

HOW DO YOU FIND FRESH MUSICAL IDEAS?

I have a system of equations that immediately give every chord on the guitar. They deal with

ideas like rotation, which is a great way to overcome musical repetition. Take a chromatic scale from C to C, a 12-note sequence, and write it on the staff. Directly below that divide it into a six-note sequence, which will give you whole tones. Below that pull out the minor thirds of the four-note diminished sequence. Next write down the major thirds, a three-note sequence, and finally the tritone, or flatted fifth, which divides the 12-note sequence in half. Connect the C and F# notes; you'll arrive at a 12-point star that shows a balance that permeates music itself. It's analogous to one point of music leading to another to create an idea, or in this case a picture. This is what I'm interested in and what I base my studies and analyses on.

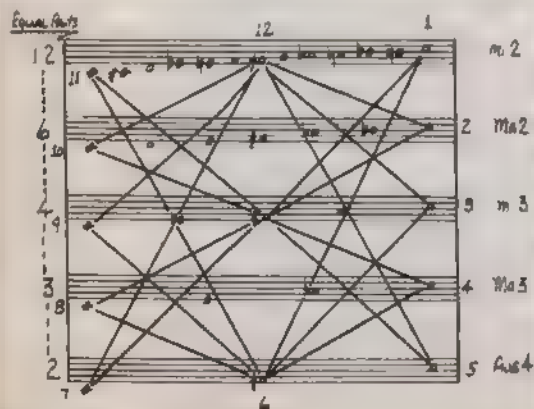
The diagram's lines intersect a di-

minished 7th chord formed by the middle staff's minor thirds. What gives?

There are only four positions on the guitar before you have note duplication. The diminished chord shows you that: You have four diminished chords going up the fingerboard before you hit the fifth, which is a duplication. That's because the diminished chord is the division of one octave into four equal parts.

You don't use key signatures.

I don't relate to them. I see everything harmonically and in a more 12-tone sense. Chromaticism plays a heavy role in my music. You have to free yourself from locked-in and false perspectives, and use your imagination to create your own breathing on your instrument. This is where your creativity abides. When you create an idea, however, you must also create an audience. Nothing is totally new; only what is forgotten seems new.



West Side Minor Blues

BY DAVE RUBIN

HAND JIVE



Can you identify this famous guitarist? see p. 139

IN THE '50S, A FORM OF BLUES DEVELOPED ON

Chicago's West Side that differed radically from the city's South Side sound, which was patterned on the electrified country stylings of Muddy and Wolf. Using B.B. King's modern arpeggio technique as a sonic blueprint, West Side players Otis Rush, Magic Sam, and Buddy Guy devised an edgy, trebly, reverbbed approach. It featured guitar rather than harmonica as the primary solo instrument. Many classic West Side tunes are in a haunting minor key.

Ex. 1 shows a 12-bar minor blues. Similar to Magic Sam's "All Your

Love," this i-IV7-V7 is a must-know progression.

Ex. 2 shows how to use sliding triads to give the I chord a more organic feel. These *Am* and *Bm* triads are extended harmonizations of Ex. 1's double-stops (bars 1-4 and 6, 7, and 11). The triads look like the sliding ninths in bars 9 and 10. There, however, the root is on the fifth string, and those shapes imply a dominant tonality.

To create a i-iv-V7 minor blues, substitute Ex. 3's sliding minor triads for the IV7 chords in bars 4, 5, and 10 of Ex. 1.

Give these two progressions a workout at your next jam.

Ex. 1

Ex. 2

Ex. 3



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Chord-Melody Secrets

BY CHARLES CHAPMAN

WHENEVER I PLAY A JAZZ chord-melody arrangement, students inevitably ask, "How'd you do that?" It takes practice, but the basic technique is straightforward, once you know a few secrets.

The place to start mastering chord-melody is with "drop-2" voicings. To create a drop-2 voicing, simply take a closed-voiced chord and lower the second note from the top down an octave. Ex. 1 shows a third-

inversion *Dm7*, first in closed and then in drop-2 voicing.

To play a tune chord-melody style:

- Raise the melody up an octave to place it on the top strings.
- While playing the melody, look for opportunities to support it with chords voiced on the lower strings.
- Apply a drop-2 voicing to all chords that fall on strong beats.
- When the melody note you

wish to harmonize is a *non*-chord tone, eliminate the chord tone immediately beneath it and play the resulting harmony in drop-2 voicing.

Ex. 2 illustrates this non-chord-tone treatment using an *A* melody above a first-inversion *Gmaj7* chord (*B, D, F#, G*). Eliminate *G*, the pitch directly beneath the melody *A*, and then drop *F#*—now the second note from the top—down an octave.

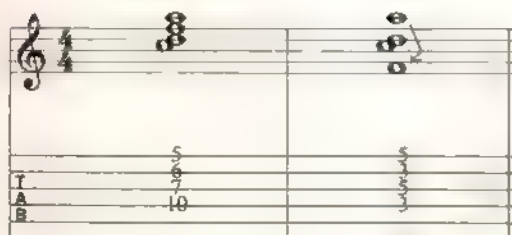
Play Ex. 3, a typical ballad

melody, and then play Ex. 4 to hear it rendered chord-melody style.

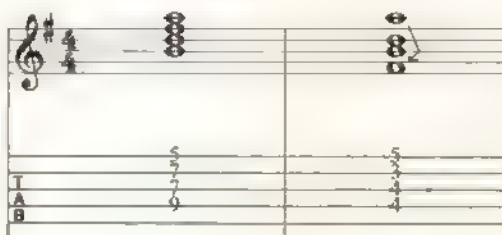
Drop-2 is a mainstay that always works, but don't limit yourself. Experiment with other voicings as you get comfortable with the style. Rock and blues forms generally aren't appropriate for chord-melody, but let your ear make the final decision—it's still the ultimate judge. If nothing seems to work, it's always acceptable to play the melody by itself.

It's good to notate chord melodies when you're starting out, but I'd suggest getting away from it as soon as possible. Instead, learn to work from a lead sheet and your fretboard. Anticipate beats, rhythmically embellish phrases, and throw in an occasional lick to fill holes. This spontaneous approach will enhance your creativity and be a lot more fun. Following these guidelines won't turn you into Joe Pass, but someone is bound to say, "How'd you do that?"

Ex. 1 *Dm7* = *D F A C*
Closed Position Drop 2



Ex. 2 *Gmaj7* = *G B D F#*
Closed Position Drop 2



Ex. 3 Slowly *Am7* *D7* *Bm7* *Em7*



Ex. 4 Slowly *Am7* *D7* *Bm7* *Em7*



May '95 Guitar Player Sessions:

- 1353 - **Chord-Melody Secrets**, by Charles Chapman
- 1354 - **David Grissom's Big Rhythm**, as told to Andy Ellis
- 1355 - **Leaping Not Sweeping**, by James Murphy
- 1356 - **West Side Minor Blues**, by Dave Rubin
- 1357 - **Power Harmonics**, by Matt Smith
- 1358 - **Clean 'N Sober Slide**, by Bill White Acre
- 1359 - **Lick Of The Month: Diminished Delirium** by Dave Porter



ACCESSING NOTES ON CALL

To sample or record any lesson in this month's Sessions section, call 1-900-370-0020 and enter the appropriate four-digit code. It costs 75¢ per minute. You'll need a touch-tone telephone and parental permission if you're under 18. To better control your time on the phone, use these touch-tone commands: 7 = forward 10 seconds; 8 = rewind 10 seconds; 9 = pause 10 seconds; # = skip to end; * = repeat lesson.

This month's lessons are available on cassette for \$14.95 (\$3.50 s/h). For credit card orders call 1-800-222-5544, or send check or money order to Notes On Call, May '95 Lessons, 146 2nd St. N., Ste. 201, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

Sessions Contributors

Sessions is an ongoing learning forum with a rotating cast of contributors. Here's the lowdown on this month's players:

- Featured in our June '94 "Youthquake!" issue, **Bill White Acre** filters his acoustic guitar through the lens of hip hop, psychedelic rock, and a bunch of gnarly electronic gear. You can get his albums—including the new *Sample The Gods*—from Kharin Gilbert at

7741 Beck Ave., North Hollywood, CA 91605

- **Charles H. Chapman** is an associate professor at Berklee's renowned guitar department, where he has taught since 1972. He's authored *Practical Notation and Guitar In The Classroom*.
- Austin's **David Grissom** plays his heart out on records by Joe Ely, John Mellencamp, James McMurtry, and Toni Price, among others. Now he's touring with Storyville, his group with singer Malford Milligan and former SRV bandmates Tommy Shannon and Chris Layton.
- The insightful **Steve Khan** is a New York session player, band-leader, and Wes Montgomery scholar. A good place to start exploring his impressive solo work is with the swinging *Headline* (Blue Moon) or Latin-tinged *Public Access* (GRP). His Flashback comments were excerpted from a Nov. '85 GP interview by Jim Ferguson
- **B.B. King** continues to grace us all with the sweetest blues this side of heaven. The master's picking advice was extracted from his Aug. '83 column.
- With his smooth, probing lines and analytical mind, **Pat Martino**

epitomizes the jazz guitarist/philosopher. His classic albums from the '60s and '70s—including *El Hambre*, *East!*, *Consciousness*, and *Baiyina*—continue to inspire a generation of thinking players. We distilled this month's lesson from Robert Yelin's Sept. '73 GP interview.

- **James Murphy** rocks hard and fast with Testament. Hear him on the band's new album *Low*. In addition to touring the planet, Murphy is working on a *Low* transcription folio for Warner/CPP Balwin.
- **Dave Rubin** has played with Chuck Berry, Screamin' Jay Hawkins, and James Brown's JBs. He's authored music features and columns for GP, and contributed to numerous other publications, including the *Jimi Hendrix Reference Library* series, *Living Blues*, and *Blues Access*. He's currently writing a series of blues instructional books for Hal Leonard.
- **Matt Smith**, a featured instructor for the National Guitar Summer Workshop and author of several guitar books, has opened for Al Di Meola, B.B. King, and Buddy Guy. For info on his band's independent CDs, write to 115 8th Ave. #9, Brooklyn, NY 11215.

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From p.137: **Duh... It's Ron Wood.**

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by David L. Burge

IT ALL STARTED in ninth grade as a sort of teenage rivalry.

I would slave at the piano for five hours daily. Linda didn't practice anywhere near that amount. But somehow she always seemed to have an edge which made her the star performer of our school. It was frustrating.

What does she have that I don't? I'd wonder. Linda's best friend Sheryl sensed my growing competition. One day she bragged on and on about Linda, adding more fuel to my fire.

"You could never be as good as Linda," she taunted me. "Linda's got Perfect Pitch."

"What's Perfect Pitch?" I asked.

Sheryl gloated over a few of Linda's uncanny abilities: how she could name any tone or chord—just by ear; how she could sing any pitch she wanted—from mere memory; how she could play songs after only listening to them on the radio!

My heart sank. Her fantastic EAR is the key to her success I thought. How could I ever hope to compete with her?

But later I doubted Sheryl's story. How could anyone possibly know F# or Bb just by listening? An ear like that would give someone a mastery of the entire musical language!

Yet it bothered me. Did Linda really have Perfect Pitch? I finally got up the nerve and pointed blank asked Linda if the rumors were true.

"Yes," she nodded to me aloofly.

But Perfect Pitch was too good to believe.

Grudely pressed, "Can I test you sometime?"

"OK," she replied cheerfully.

I couldn't wait to call her bluff...

My plan was ingeniously simple: I picked a moment when Linda least suspected it, then boldly challenged her to name tones for me—by ear.

I made sure she had not been playing any music. I made her stand so she could not see the piano keyboard. I made certain that other classmates could not help her. I set everything up perfectly so I could expose Linda's Perfect Pitch claims as some kind of ridiculous joke.

Nervously I plotted my testing strategy. Linda appeared serene. Then, with silent apprehension, I selected a tone to play. (She'll never guess F#!)

I had barely touched the key.

"F#," she said.

I was astonished.

I played another tone. She didn't even stop to think. Instantly she announced the correct pitch. Frantically,

I played more

and more

tones here

and there on

the keyboard.

But each time

she would

somehow

know the

pitch. She was

SO amazing.

She could

identify tones

as easily as colors!

"Sing an E!" I demanded, determined to mess her up.

With barely a pause she sang the proper pitch. I had her sing tone after tone (trying hard to make them increasingly difficult). But as I checked her on the keyboard, I found that she sang each note perfectly on pitch.

I was totally boggled. "How in the world do you do it?" I blurted.

"I don't know," she sighed. And to my dismay, that was all I could get out of her!



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The dazzle of Perfect Pitch hit me hard. My head was dizzy with disbelief, yet from that moment on I knew Perfect Pitch is real.

I couldn't figure it out...

"How does she DO it?" I kept asking myself. On the other hand, why can't everyone recognize basic musical tones by ear? It dawned on me that most people can't tell a simple C from a C#, or the key of A major from F major! It seemed so strange that a musician would not know tones—like a painter who doesn't know colors! Or a mathematician who can't recognize numbers! Or an English teacher who cannot identify a dangling participle!

I found myself even more mystified than before. Humiliated and puzzled, I went home to work on this intriguing problem. At age 14, this was a hard nut to crack.

You can be sure I tried it myself. I would sweet-talk my three brothers and two sisters into playing tones for me, then I'd try to guess each pitch by ear. My many attempts were dismal failures.

So I tried playing the tones over and over in order to memorize them. I tried to feel the "highness" or "lowness" of each pitch. I tried day after day to learn and absorb those elusive tones. But nothing worked. I simply could not recognize the pitches by ear.

After weeks in vain, I finally gave up. Linda's Perfect Pitch was extraordinary—a prized trophy of talent and virtuosity. But for me, an ear like that was way out of reach.



Autumn 1970

"How in the world do you do it?" I blurted. I was totally boggled.

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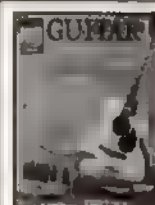
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Encore

"I've owned Super 400s, L-5s, D'Angelicos, Strombergs, every fine archtop you can imagine," says Vincent Gallo, owner of this month's Encore. "I used to turn my nose up at factory guitars. Even now I can look at Teles, Esquires, and 'Nocasters' all day, and they're no big deal. I went to a show recently and saw five black-guard Teles and wouldn't have bought any of them. But once I heard a friend playing in a pizzeria. He had a Tele with very heavy strings—.013 through .058—and a Gibson GA-50 amp. It was the best jazz guitar sound I've ever heard in my life.

"This '53 Telecaster is extraordinary—one of those guitars where everything comes together, and the whole is just so right. It has so much juice—the sound, the feel, the way the butterscotch finish has mellowed over the years. I like the '53 because it's one of the early Teles with the regular tone control instead of the blend knob. This neck is big and chunky, so .013s won't scare it at all. Somehow this little guitar is more of a special object than most of those great archtops I've

owned. It's changed the way I view guitars. An acoustic with a pickup can have a great sound in a small room because it has some acoustic presence, but if you're really going to go electric, sinking a pickup into an archtop makes no sense. The solidbody is the way to go."

Details include three brass saddles and dome knobs. Gallo adds, "The former owner, a cowboy named Alex, cut his name into the original pickguard like a stencil, and now you can see a ghost image of his name underneath the guard." Photo by Steve Berger.

—TOM WHEELER



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